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THE SERMON BIBLE.

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PSALM LXXVII. TO SONG OF SOLOMON.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

GOOD old-fashioned volumes of lectures by Dr. Lawson and Dr. Wardlaw are still useful. Better is William Arnot's "Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth," which, however, does not deal with the whole work. Dr. David Thomas has an exposition called "The Practical Philosopher." Delitzsch's critical commentary is the best.

ECCLESIASTES.

There are suggestive works on this book by Plumptre, S. Cox, and T. C. Finlayson, and an exhaustive commentary by Dr. C. H. H. Wright. Dr. James Hamilton's "Royal Preacher" is well known.

SONG OF SOLOMON.

Moody Stuart and Littledale represent the spiritual interpretation from very different points of view. By interpreters of other schools the book has been somewhat avoided.

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PSALMS LXXVII.—CL.

Psalm lxxvii., ver. 3.—"I remembered God, and was troubled."

THERE are two points of view under which we wish to present this subject: the strangeness of such an experience and some of the reasons that may account for it.

I. The strangeness of such an experience—that a man should remember God and yet be troubled. For consider: (1) that such an experience is against all that is made known to us of the nature of God. From the very first, revelation has had one purpose, and could have only one: to present God in such a light that His sinful creatures should come and find rest in Him. (2) It becomes strange when we reflect not only on the nature of God, but on His promises. They are so universal, so free, so full, that they seem fitted to meet every want and satisfy every yearning of the human soul. That the heart of a man who hears these words and believes that they come from the lips of God should be troubled at remembering Him must seem very strange. (3) It must appear strange further when we consider that trouble at the thought of God is declared to be against the experience of all sincere seekers. There is a history of cases reaching all through the Bible, and the burden of them is, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." The appeal of all ages has been, "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." (4) Such an experience is against all that we can reasonably believe of the nature of the soul of man. If one theory be true about man's soul, it is this: that out of God no full, satisfying end can be found for it. The soul is greater than the whole world, and the greater cannot be blessed of the less.

II. Consider some of the reasons that may be given for such an experience as this. (1) The first reason is that many men do not make God the object of sufficient thought. (2) Another reason why many are troubled at the thought of God is that they are seeking Him with a wrong view of the way of access. (3) A third reason is that they are seeking Him with some reserved thought of sin. (4) A fourth reason is that they have

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a mistaken view of God's manner of dealing with us in this world.

It is in the experience of the Divine life that doubts melt away or can be held in quiet expectancy of a solution, and that we approach gradually to the calm of those that rest beneath the altar. The thought of God that for a while brings trouble shall be made the source of hope, the pledge that all with you and with His universe shall be ordered to a happy end; and even here amid the trouble and struggle of earth, He can put into the mouth some notes of the praise of heaven.

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 305.

REFERENCES: lxxvii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 853; J. Irons. *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 237; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 1st series, p. 228. lxxvii. 3.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 25; Parker, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 122, and *Christian Chronicle*, Sept. 20th, 1883. lxxvii. 5.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons chiefly Practical*, p. 353.

Psalm lxxvii., vers. 7–10.—"Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more?" etc.

THE moral to be drawn from this Psalm is that in all troubles and adversities it is our own fault if we have not a light to guide and cheer us, and that the true remedy against despondency is to look back upon the love of God pledged to us and His mercy shown to us in former days.

I. As soon as David looks his desponding thoughts in the face, he sees their absurdity; and he sees, too, that all his painful feelings have arisen, not from the absence of God's protecting care, but from his own weakness and foolishness. "I said, It is *mine own* infirmity."

II. If the Psalmist allowed his mind a range wider than his own personal experience, and considered the past evidences of the presence of God with His Church, the conclusion would be the same. If God were with His Church, and David a member of it, he had sufficient to make distrust a fault and despondency a sin.

III. Each one of us in the ordinary progress both of his temporal and spiritual life may find much that is worthy of his imitation in the conduct of David as expressed in the text. In all the roughnesses of the road which we have to pass over, we may, after first acknowledging our own infirmity, repose our minds on the thought of God's mercies to us in days gone by.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 66.

REFERENCE: lxxvii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1843.

Psalm lxxvii., ver. 10.—"And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

THERE are three kinds of speaking in this Psalm: speaking to God, speaking to our fellows, and speaking to one's self.

I. To how many of our thoughts, and feelings, and spiritual utterances may we apply these words: "This is my infirmity"! Of hard thoughts of God, of dark views of His providence, of distrustful feelings towards God, and often of corresponding thoughts, and views, and feelings towards men, we may say, "This is my infirmity." And the weakness of the body, faults in the spirit, and Satanic influence are the fountains and the causes of these utterances. The Psalmist resolves, as an antidote to despondency and fear, to bring the past and the present, recollections and existing consciousness, the day of his trouble and years of joyousness, the right hand of the Most High and his enemies and troubles—he resolves to bring them into comparison, to bring them together. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

II. These words, "the right hand of the Most High," represent the power of God as manifested in all sovereignty and sufficiency on behalf of those who trust in Him. (1) God works. Power is continually going out of Him. (2) God works perfectly. His work is right-hand work. (3) He works as the Most High. He fills the above as well as the beneath. There is One higher than the Law: the Lawgiver.

III. Notice two or three brief exhortations springing from this subject. (1) Commune with your own heart; talk to yourself. (2) Give memory its full share of work in your religious life. (3) Avoid contracted views. Look at to-day, but look at the years. Look at second causes, and agents, and means; but ever consider the right hand of the Most High.

S. MARTIN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 878.

REFERENCES: lxxvii. 10.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 152. lxxvii. 11, 14, 15, 19, 20.—G. Forbes, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 251. lxxvii. 13.—H. Melvill, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 297.

Psalm lxxvii., ver. 19.—"Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known."

THERE must be mystery in religion—a religion which lies between the finite and the Infinite. Take away mystery, and we should tear out a page of evidence. But there is more hiddenness about the providence of God than there is about the grace of God. He has revealed much more clearly what He

does and what He wills about our souls than about our bodies. This is the reason, perhaps, why faith finds it so much harder work to trust for time than it does for eternity, and why there are so many who have no fear for their salvation, and yet who are hourly anxious about their daily wants.

I. The distinction between the degree of the mystery of providence and grace underlies the text. There is a climax and an anticlimax. (1) Observe "way," "path," "footsteps." The way is greater than the path; the way is broad: the path is necessarily narrow, as in the familiar verse, "In all thy ways" —*i.e.*, in all thy great things—"acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy little things," thy "paths;" while "footsteps" are smaller still than paths—little isolated marks lying here and there along the path. So it runs down—way, path, footsteps. (2) Now see the ascending scale. "Thy way is in the sea" —the sea classically is always shallow water—"Thy path in the great waters," which lie far out, more unfathomable than the shallows of the shore; while the "footsteps" are altogether out of sight, something beyond the sea and beyond the great waters, utterly out of reach: they "are not known."

II. As respects God's hidden ways, there are one or two things which we ought to consider. (1) God never meant you to understand them. We are to seek the solution of hard problems, and the quelling of our fears, and the answer to our doubts, not in the events themselves, but in the character of God, not in the book of present history, but in the volume of the Scriptures. (2) Faith has its helps. As we live on, many things which were once fearful, involved, and hard come out kind, simple, and plain; we see, if not all, yet some, of the reasons: and we are satisfied where we were once most dissatisfied. The past stands sponsor for the future.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 124.

IN the history of Israel we find not merely an impressive symbol, but a great practical truth, the truth, namely, that those who follow God follow a Leader whose footsteps are not known; that, in other words, he who accepts the service of God accepts with it much which he cannot understand. Mystery is bound up with God's revelation and dealing with the human race.

I. We are not to conclude that because there is a mystery in God's dealings they are therefore without a plan. We are to remember that the confusion is in us, and not in God's work; that God's counsel is not darkened because we are blind.

II. We are not to conclude that this mystery of providence is the outgrowth of unkindness.

III. The Psalmist has evidently reached very satisfactory conclusions on this subject. The secret of his confidence is revealed in the thirteenth verse, in the words, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary," or "Thy way is in holiness." No matter how strange the way if it be a way of holiness!

IV. "Thou leddest Thy people." The true philosophy of life is summed up here, in simply following God.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 181.

REFERENCES: lxxvii. 19.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 132. lxxvii. 19, 20.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 340; C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 116. lxxviii. 3, 4.—J. T. Stannard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 136. lxxviii. 5-7.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 238. lxxviii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 696; S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, 1st series, p. 9. lxxviii. 10.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 305; J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 113.

Psalm lxxviii., ver. 20.—"Behold, He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? can He provide flesh for His people?"

NOTICE what kind of unbelief is here. It does not deny the past fact. It acknowledges that God has done a miracle of mercy. But in that miracle it finds no such revelation of God Himself and His perpetual character and love as gives assurance that He will again be powerful and merciful. These Israelites have no accumulated faith. They are just where they were before the last miracle relieved them. That miracle stands wholly by itself. It does not promise or imply another.

I. The power of accumulation of life differs extremely in different men. Some men gather living force, wisdom, faith, out of every experience. Other men leave the whole experience behind them, and carry out with them nothing but the barren recollection of it. And the difference, when we examine it, depends on this: on whether the man has any conception of a continuous, unbroken principle or personal association running through life, and bringing out of each experience its soul and essence to be perpetually kept.

II. The true unity of life is the unity of a long journey in which, though the quick railroad is constantly compelling you to leave each new scene behind you, the wise, kind company of the friend whom you are travelling with, and who in each new scene has had the chance to show you something new of his

wisdom and kindness, has been continually with you and bound the long journey into a unit.

III. Suppose a human soul looking out into the mysterious and unrevealed experiences of the everlasting world. The window of death is wide open; and the soul stands up before it, and looks through, and sees eternity. How shall the soul carry with it the sense of safety and assurance in God, which it has won within His earthly care, forth into this unknown, untrodden vastness whither it now must go? Only in one way; only by deepening as deeply as possible its assurance that it is God—not accident, not its own ingenuity, not its brethren's kindness—that it is God who has made this earthly life so rich and happy. Wrapped into Him, the soul may be not merely resigned; it may be even impatient to explore those larger regions where the power which has made itself known to it here shall be able to display to it all the completeness of its nature and its love.

IV. There is a difference between coming out of sorrow thankful for relief and coming out of sorrow full of sympathy with, and trust in, Him who has released us. To the soul that finds in all life new and ever deeper knowledge of Christ, life is for ever accumulating. This is the only real transfiguration of the dusty road, the monotony and routine of living.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 320.

REFERENCES: lxxviii. 23-25.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 459. lxxviii. 25.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1497.

Psalm lxxviii., vers. 34-37.—"When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God," etc.

I. IT is a subject well worthy of the serious consideration of all persons who desire to be in the safe way of salvation how commonly it happens that the best intentions and resolutions, made in times of danger and affliction, are thought little or nothing more of when the alarm is over. Every one knows that numbers of persons who have been on the very brink of death, and have been restored, yet have been in no respect whatever the better afterwards for such a fearful warning. Indeed, it is so common a case that no one wonders at it.

II. To a reflecting mind it seems little less than a miracle that we should be preserved in the manner we are from day to day. And is not this matter for daily thankfulness? and should not the consideration of it make us ever feel as persons every moment rescued from the brink of ruin, every moment supported

by an unseen, almighty hand? However, as these daily mercies are so slightly regarded, our tender Father frequently by some more signal visitation calls us back from carelessness and folly. It is a truth ever to be remembered by us that the resolutions and vows we make in such hours of trial and on the bed of sickness are remembered and recorded in God's book. They will be brought forward again in the great day of final account.

III. We ought to be very careful of trusting to a partial amendment, of thinking that because we are better than we once were, or better than many other people, therefore we are in the way to heaven. Amidst this dim and perplexing prospect, the comfort is that our heavenly Father knows our weakness and our wants, that Christ Jesus, who is hereafter to be our Judge, is now touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 126.

REFERENCES: lxxviii. 38.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 57. lxxviii. 40.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i., p. 88.

Psalm lxxviii., ver. 41.—"And they limited the Holy One of Israel."

I. EVER since the fall of man, there has been a natural tendency in the human heart to "limit the Holy One of Israel." This is the crime of idolatry and of heathenism. This was the contest of the Hebrew worship with the surrounding nations. Let *us* beware how we create an image of God in our minds dishonourable to Him, and by its limitation to our poor faculty become the means of limiting the Holy One of Israel.

II. For idolatry is not its own root; it is the growth of a seed deeper than itself, and that seed is *sin*. Sin limits the Holy One of Israel, the corrupt influence in the mind and in the heart, the perverted imagination, the perverted will. Sin closes the avenues by which God enters the human soul, and narrows the Divine Being in the conception.

III. There is no power so subtle as unbelief, doubt. By this we limit the Holy One of Israel. Doubt makes the Divine Being subservient to our own estimate of what He is. How frequently Christian men walk amidst the very mysteries and eternities of Godhead only to limit the Holy One of Israel.

IV. Some philosophers limit the Holy One of Israel even in the operations of nature. There is a feeling that as we enlarge the boundaries of the universe God is carried to a more remote distance from us. The past fills the soul ever with fear. It is

so whenever we are led out into infinity. Night has had three daughters: Religion, Superstition, and Atheism.

V. Again, when on behalf of God we appeal to *man as free*, and invite him to love, and trust, and believe, doubt says, In what way can man's responsibility so act as not to limit God's royalty, if we are ambassadors for Christ? God Himself anticipates these objections; in prayer He aids: in speaking He aids. He is on the side of the freedom of man; He, too, will aid man to assert his freedom: and he who doubts the possibility of this limits the Holy One of Israel, who giveth His Holy Spirit to them that ask.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 365.

REFERENCES: lxxviii. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 272. lxxviii. 41, 42.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 241.

Psalm lxxviii., ver. 69.—"He built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which He hath established for ever."

I. STABILITY and permanence are, perhaps, the especial ideas which a church brings before the mind. It represents, indeed, the beauty, the loftiness, the calmness, the mystery, and the sanctity of religion also, and that in many ways. Still, more than all these, it represents to us its eternity.

II. See what a noble principle faith is. The Christian throws himself fearlessly on the future, because he believes in Him which is, and which was, and which is to come. One lays the foundation, and another builds thereupon; one levels the mountain, and another "brings forth the head-stone with shoutings."

III. The Churches which we inherit are the fruits of martyrdom. Their foundations are laid very deep, even in the preaching of the Apostles, and the confession of saints, and the first victories of the Gospel in our land. The Church alone can plant the Church.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Selection from the Parochial and Plain Sermons*, p. 377 (also vol. vi., p. 270).

Psalm lxxviii., ver. 70.—"He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds."

I. CONSIDER David's calling. The words of the text form the clearest and grandest explanation of the wonderful process by which the unknown shepherd became Israel's greatest king. Two questions present themselves here: (1) How was David's shepherd life an unconscious preparation for his calling? The effect of solitude is to awaken faith in the invisible. Sailors

see portents in the clouds, hear words in the night wind; shepherds have a strong belief in the supernatural. In solitude and stillness the deeper soul awakens. Amid the stillness of the ancient hills, David, the shepherd youth, was learning to feel a presence which surrounded him behind and before, and to realise the nearness of One who read his thoughts in the silence. (2) How did the Divine summons fit him for his vocation? The hour came when he was to know that through all his years he had been trained for it, when "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward." And now observe, *he was sent back to his flocks*, in the full knowledge of his grand destiny sent to pass years of silent waiting. There were two great convictions awakened in him then that formed in him elements of strength through all his career: (*a*) the belief in a Divine Leader; (*b*) the belief in a Divine choice.

II. Notice the modern lessons of David's calling. (1) There is a Divine plan in every life. (2) There is a Divine vocation for every man. (3) There is a Divine Shepherd for every man.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons Preached at King's Lynn*, 1st series, p. 132.

REFERENCES: lxxviii. 70, 71.—F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 36. lxxix. 13.—F. W. Farrar, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 124. lxxix. 15.—J. H. Hitchens, *Catholic Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 73. lxxix. 35.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 217. lxxix.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 247.

Psalm lxxxi., vers. 11, 12.—"My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up."

IT cannot be doubted that very often when people get into wrong courses they think they shall be able to stop when they please. And this notion tends very much to quiet their consciences, and to make them tolerably easy and cheerful even whilst they are doing things they know to be wrong or neglecting duties they know to be right.

I. This life is a course of trial, proof, and preparation for a lasting state of good or evil beyond the grave. God having put it in our power to choose for ourselves, leaves it to ourselves to make the choice, at the same time plainly warning us that if we choose the right path and follow it on, He will help us, but if we choose the wrong path and refuse to listen to His voice, He will, however unwillingly, give us up, leave us to go our own way.

II. The notion that a wrong habit is not dangerous, because

we may reform it when we please, seems to have its root in want of love to God, the Author of all good, want of pure, devoted charity, that without which "all our doings are nothing worth." If true religion consisted in the mere outward performance of certain good actions or the mere inward indulgence of certain good feelings, if this were all that is required in the true Christian, then our need of watchfulness and self-suspicion would not be so great. But is it not true that the law of the Christian is love, devoted love to his God and Saviour; and that for the want of this love nothing can make up? Is it not also true that we have no way of evincing this our love to be sincere but by a thorough and earnest anxiety to give up our whole wills, under all circumstances and on every occasion, to the will of Him who is our only hope? This, then, is the question: Are we sincerely obeying Him? do we give up our wills to His? will we and do we submit to any loss, shame, or mortification rather than grieve His Holy Spirit? If not, we have reason to fear lest God should give us up to walk in our own counsels, and at length should "swear in His wrath that we shall not enter into His rest."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 134.

REFERENCES: lxxx. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 338. lxxx. 8.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons in the East*, p. 9. lxxx. 14.—F. Delitzsch, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 67. lxxx. 14, 15.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons chiefly Practical*, p. 507. lxxx. 15-17.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 49. lxxx. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 284. lxxxi. 2.—J. B. Heard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 87. lxxxi. 10.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 101.

Psalm lxxxi., vers. 12, 13.—"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels," etc.

I. GOD showed His love to the Israelites by giving them a law more strict than any which had gone before it; He revealed Himself as a jealous God, who would be obeyed; He curbed all their actions, and He punished them severely for all transgressions of His law. It was only as a last step, when the people were determined to rebel, that He granted to them that prime blessing, as a worldly mind would consider it, namely leisure to follow their own hearts' lust and to do according to their own imaginations.

II. God's principles of government are ever the same; He changes not: and if it was only in being governed by Him, in wearing His yoke, in carrying His burdens, that the people of

Israel could escape bondage, and be lifted up, and be noble and free, then beyond doubt the same is true of ourselves, and we too shall be slaves as long as we are free, and shall only be free when we become in heart and soul the servants of God.

III. The man who wears Christ's yoke feels that he must keep a watch over his life and over his thoughts. (1) He bridles his tongue; (2) he is particular in the choice of his company; (3) he puts a curb upon his appetite; (4) he thinks it right to be particular about his devotions and his attendance on ordinances.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 50.

REFERENCES: lxxxi. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1221. lxxxi.—J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 159.

Psalm lxxxii., ver. 8 (Prayer-book version).—"Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth: for Thou shalt take all heathen to Thine inheritance."

THE psalmists and prophets of old earnestly desired that God would arise to judge the earth. They desired it not for their own sakes, but for the earth's sake. We are wont to divide the advent of mercy from the advent of judgment by an immense tract of ages. When we read the Prophets, we are perplexed by finding these advents brought together as if they were parts of the same transaction, as if one could scarcely be separated from the other. This apparent union of opposite subjects, of times far separated, is not less characteristic of Evangelists and Apostles than of the elder men. Very seldom indeed do they speak of Christ as having come without bidding His followers look for Him and wait for Him as about to come. How is this habit of speech to be accounted for?

I. The Church does not distinguish the advent of our Lord from His incarnation. She regards His coming upon this earth as His coming into our nature. Another thought was combined in the minds of the Apostles with this, without which it is imperfect. They believed that man was made in the image of God; they believed that He who is the perfect image of God must set forth, can alone set forth, true and perfect manhood. What follows? The advent of Christ was the advent of the true King, and Head, and Judge of men; it could be nothing else if it was the advent of the Son of God, of Him after whose likeness men were created.

II. Christ appearing in great humility neither completed the salvation nor the judgment. His resurrection and ascension

were to carry on what the Incarnation had begun. The message of full redemption, of an advent for judgment, must rest upon them. St. Paul was the witness of a justification for every man, of a justification for mankind. And therefore St. Paul was the great preacher of judgment. The revelation of God's righteousness for the justification of men was, he said, itself the "revelation of God's wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

III. Substitute for this idea of an advent the mere notion of a birth taking place at a certain period in Bethlehem, of that being the birth of the Founder of our religion, of that being the birth from which we date our time; and see how inevitably all the conclusions which seemed so natural to the Apostles become utterly unnatural and incredible to us. We may give what glorious titles to our Lord we please; but in that case He is but a man exalted above men, not the Root and Head of humanity. No warnings of divines can prevent us from falling back upon the old question, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

IV. The question has been answered; all things have not continued as they were since the fathers fell asleep. God has been testifying to the conscience of each human being that the hour is at hand when *he* must be tried and judged, when he will be asked by the Son of man whether he has owned or despised Him in the least of His brethren.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 1.

REFERENCES: lxxxiii. 3.—J. Jackson Wray, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 92. lxxxiii. 6, 7, 11.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 61. lxxxiii. 16.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, pp. 23, 34. lxxxiii. 26-28.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2628. lxxxiv. 1.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 3rd series, p. 293. lxxxiv. 1, 2.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 109.

Psalm lxxxiv., vers. 1-4.—"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" etc.

I. CONSIDER who is the Father of this home. He is the almighty God. With what confidence it becomes the children of such a Father to depend on their home being replenished with happiness! He is your Father; treat Him not as your enemy. Recommend His house by your cheerfulness. Melancholy is its discredit.

II. Consider who is the Steward of this house. It is the Son of God, whom His Father has appointed to the office. Notice two things which assure us of the faithfulness and tenderness

with which Christ must discharge His stewardlike trust. (1) There is His devotedness to His Father's honour and gratification. (2) In addition to the general benevolence of His character, there is His kinsmanship for our security. We are not only His Father's children: we are His own brethren.

III. Consider who is the Tutor of the Christian home—He through whom the Son, as Steward for the Father, conducts the education of the family. It is as the Illuminator and Educator of the soul that as a Physician the Holy Ghost cures it of its diseases, and as its Law-agent guides it either in its pleadings for mercy before the throne of God, or in its defences against its adversaries: the devil, the world, and the flesh.

IV. The provision and entertainment of the home are presided over and administered with this threefold Divine care. Good thoughts are the feast provided in the Christian's home. There is one thought which unites with and pervades all the rest: the proclamation of the pardon of the Cross. Not only is this thought a feast of itself, but it is only as it mingles with the other thoughts that they prove a feast too.

W. ANDERSON, *Discourses*, p. 205.

REFERENCE: lxxxiv. 1-7.—J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 28.

Psalm lxxxiv., ver. 2.—"My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

THE whole of this Psalm is the uttered desire of a soul for public worship. Yet, after all, the Psalmist reaches the climax of desire not when he speaks of the sanctuary, but of God Himself.

I. Observe the desire of heart and flesh—the living God. If a man wishes to know whether he is really a saint or no, he can very soon find out by putting his finger upon the pulse of his desires, for these are things that can never be counterfeit. The desire of the true saint is after God Himself. There are three things which sufficiently account for this desire Godward; and the first and chief is that every saint has within his breast that which is actually born of God, and therefore it cries out after its own Father. (2) Another reason is that every believer has the Spirit of God dwelling within him; and if he has the Spirit of God dwelling within him, it is only natural that he should desire God. (3) This desire after God becomes intensified by earth's experience.

II. Observe the intensity of the desire: "My heart and my

flesh crieth out." Heart and flesh being both mentioned, we are taught that it is the desire of the whole man. In the original this word "crieth out" means the cry of a company of soldiers as they fall on the foe. There is expectation, eagerness, desire, all concentrated in its note. (1) It is an intensity that drowns all other desires—"crieth out for God." (2) It is an intensity of desire that creates pain. The language of our text is the language of a soul which can bear its anguish no longer in silence. It is a cry extorted by inward pangs.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1077.

REFERENCE: lxxxiv. 2.—L. D. Bevan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 361

Psalm lxxxiv., ver. 3.—"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God."

I. THE first point in the analogy is that of rest and home—home rest. The house of God, the house of the Father, and the elder Brother, and all the children, is, and must be from its nature, a home. All needed rest and comfort is to be found in it.

II. Liberty. To the soul in God's house, as to the bird in its nest, there is a happy combination of rest and freedom. A nest is not a cage. There is rest in revealed truth in Christ, in a reconciled God, in holiness; but there is the freedom of a spirit which abides in these because they are ever true and real to it, and which goes forth at liberty to seek and find all that is in any way good or true.

W. MORISON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 143.

REFERENCES: lxxxiv. 3.—H. Macmillan, *The Olive Leaf*, p. 119, Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 154; *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 496. lxxxiv. 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 283; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 252. lxxxiv. 5.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 205.

Psalm lxxxiv., vers. 5, 6.—"Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools."

I. EVERY true Christian must expect to have his own private "valley of Baca." (1) But even this shows the intelligence which is resident in our trials. Nothing happens; all is ordered. And one of our arguments to prove we are in the true way is found in the discovery that it leads through roughness and confusion. (2) This is the way along which our Saviour went before us. We must learn to discern the tracks of Jesus.

II. Every true Christian must expect to pass through his valley of Baca. Jerusalem lay on the top of a hill. It was surrounded with mountains, traversed by ravines and gorges. Valleys sunless and barren seemed most unwelcome roadways, but they afforded the surest and shortest approaches to Zion. (1) There is no mountain without its valley. (2) By the grace of God, rests have been allowed by the way.

III. Every true Christian must expect to find a "well" in each valley of Baca. (1) In every sorrow there is some mitigation. (2) Sometimes trouble opens new sluices of joy in our experience. (3) We must always search deeply all around our afflictions.

IV. Every true Christian may force even the valley of Baca to become his well. Two conditions of success in finding out the blessedness of sorrow are indicated here in the verses of the text. One is full trust in Divine providence; the other is habitual repose upon Divine wisdom.

V. Every true Christian will find his valley of Baca ending on the mount of God. "Every one of them appeareth before God."

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 1.

REFERENCE: lxxxiv. 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 257.

Psalm lxxxiv., ver. 7 (with Eph. iv., ver. 15: "Grow").—"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

THERE is a whole "Pilgrim's Progress" in this text from the wicket-gate to the Celestial City. And, indeed, it is a pilgrim's song, the song of the Israelites ascending from the extreme parts of their nation to the great assembling of the people. And the Church has through all ages adopted this word as the expression of its experience. Nothing gained is merely gained for rest, only for further and future acquisition.

I. The Gospel of Christ is a wonderful adaptation for the forming of a perfect man. It is adapted to every variety of character, to every variety of mental and moral state, to every variety of circumstance and condition. It touches the necessities of all, speaks to the yearnings of all, answers the questions of all, responds to the hopes of all, expands the affections of all. It says to all, Grow.

II. The truth is, man is a progressive being. "If he be not rising up to be an angel, he is sinking to be a devil." His tendency may be more downwards than upwards; and he may

be perfect not only in Christ, but he may be, through passion and through the knowledge of sin, perfect in the enormity of sin.

III. This is the method of life with all of us. Every acquisition is the ground of future conquest. Every gain is only the hope of future gain. "And thus the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.' "Till we all come to the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus." To this the individual, to this the race, shall come. In that future world to which our life is hastening there will be scope for every development. Thither our footsteps and our best ambitions turn; and surely, even in a "strange land," the going with weariness from strength to strength will be compensated by such a home.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 163.

Psalm lxxxiv., ver. 7.—"They go from strength to strength."

NOTICE a few unequivocal evidences of spiritual progress in the condition of the saint of God.

I. A growing sense of God.

II. A growing dependence upon Christ.

III. Increasing steadiness and success in the resistance of temptation.

IV. Decreasing absorption in worldly objects and attractions.

V. An increased unselfishness and disinterestedness of religious emotion.

VI. A deepened composure in anticipating death and eternity.

A. MURSELL, *Calls to the Cross*, p. 141.

REFERENCES: lxxxiv. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 349; H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 230; F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 138; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 107. lxxxiv. 10.—*Ibid.*, p. 252; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 114.

Psalm lxxxiv., ver. 11.—"For the Lord God is a sun."

PERHAPS no other object in nature has so many attributes that fit it to represent a supreme and invisible source of power, and life, and government as the sun.

I. Observe its universality, as a fit emblem of the universal power of God.

II. The forthstreaming of light and power from the sun has

been going on through incomputable periods of time. Man's lamp is daily filled and trimmed, emblem of his own mind, that by rest and sleep refills its waste. The sun needs no trimming. God's lamp and God pour for ever untrimmed and unfilled. He is the God of ages, and yet is not old.

III. Consider also what an image of abundance the sun affords. God is everywhere in Scripture described as fruitful of effects, yet serene, quiescent, still. No being so little as God rests, and yet no being is conceived to be so quiescent as He.

IV. Sunlight not only bears light for guidance and heat for comfort, but has a stimulating and developing power. The sun exerts creative energy. All things presuppose the sun. The whole life of the animal and vegetable kingdom waits day by day for the ministering care and stimulus of the sun. And this is most significantly an image of that presence, and power, and nursing influence which resides in our God.

V. The sun is the centre of attraction, the holding force of the universe. Its invisible power harnesses all planets and stars. So God is the centre of power, and the centre of government.

VI. Consider that generosity and democracy which the sun exercises. The sun bears itself without partiality in infinite abundance and continuity. It is a life-giving stimulus to all things. And it is the emblem of God, of whom it is said, "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

VII. Prolific and infinite in benefit as the sun is, it is observable that only a part of its benefit is thrust upon man, and that that part is mainly that which concerns his lower necessities. If we would go further, and use the sun as artists use it, and draw out its subtler elements of beauty, we must study its laws in that direction and obey them. So it is with the Sun of righteousness. He sheds a providential watchfulness and protection upon all men, without regard to character; but if men would go higher and perfect the understanding, refine the moral sentiments, purify the heart, and come to be Godlike, developing the God that is in them, for this there is special labour required.

H. W. BEECHER, *Forty-eight Sermons*, vol. i., p. 345.

REFERENCES: lxxxiv. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 252; R. S. Candlish, *Sonship and Brotherhood of Believers*, pp. 66. 79. lxxxiv. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1659. lxxxiv.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 109, and vol. vii., p. 56; E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 75.

Psalm lxxxv., ver. 6.—"Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

I. As individual Christians and as Churches of Jesus Christ, we need to be very clear in our doctrinal foundations. Beginning with the doctrine of sin, let us strive after God's view of it. Out of a true knowledge of sin will come a true appreciation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. If we lay firmly hold of these two points—the sinfulness of sin and the work of Jesus Christ—we shall come to know what is meant by the glow of piety.

II. We must have a public ministry which is faithful to the spirit and demands of Jesus Christ. All Christian ministers are called to be faithful to Jesus Christ in seeking the salvation of men. We have a great positive work to do. We have affirmative truths to teach. We have to cast out devils, not by controversy, but by Divinely revealed and authoritative truths.

III. There is one feature in our public Christianlife that should be more fully brought out: the bearing of individual testimony on behalf of Jesus Christ.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 25.

REFERENCE: lxxxv. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 357.

Psalm lxxxv., ver. 8.—"He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly."

I. THE death of sin is mostly a gradual process, a thing going on for a long time, and not beginning or ending in one sharp, single struggle. Yet neither is it true that it goes on quite evenly. On the contrary, it has its sharper seasons and its gentler ones. It has times when it destroys much of the principle of sin within us; it has times also when it does little more than hold its ground, and the struggle seems suspended.

II. The process of the death of sin has in it nothing horrible, nothing exciting; the imagination may not be struck by it: and yet it is of an interest really far deeper than the death of the body, and an interest which we may all presently realise. It works quietly and invisibly to the eyes of others, but most perceptibly and most truly to him who is undergoing it.

III. Many struggle successfully against one marked fault, but fly back from the prospect of having to overcome a whole sinful nature and having to become made anew after God's image. So it is but too often, but so it is not always. Let us suppose that we bear the sight of our general sinfulness not with a cowardly despair, but with a Christian resolution; then indeed begins the struggle which may be truly called the death

of sin. Then our old nature begins to die sensibly, in no part without pain.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 139.

IT is not too much to say that whoever will resolve to listen as David listened will hear what David heard. Only determine, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," and "He will speak peace." God never disappoints a really attentive hearer.

I. God has always something to say to us. We only miss it either because we do not believe that He is going to speak, or because we are not quiet enough. This is frequently the reason of a sickness or a deep sorrow. God has something to say to us. He makes a calm, He settles the rush of life, that He may speak. The Shepherd draws the hurdles closer that His sheep, being nearer to Him, may the better hear the Shepherd's voice.

II. There are few of us who do not know what these times are when God has come very near. They are very critical times; great issues hang upon them: they will weigh heavily in the balances of "the great account of life." From these high-wrought feelings there will be a reaction. The moment you become earnest for good, Satan will become earnest to stop you. He who had read life better than almost any man who ever lived saw the need of the caution, "He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly."

III. The expression, "turn again to folly," may mean one of three things. Either all sin is folly, or you may understand by it the particular sin of those who return to the vanities of the world, or you may take it to imply that a relapse into what is wrong has such a distorting influence on the mind, and so perverts the judgment and darkens the intellect, that both by natural consequence and judicial retribution the condition of a person who goes on in sin after the strivings of the Holy Ghost and after the manifestations of God's peace becomes emphatically "folly."

IV. Peace, the peace of Christ, is a delicate plant. Do not expose it. Do not trifle with it, but lay it up in your heart's closest affections. Watch it. Deal tenderly with it. It is your life.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 210.

REFERENCE: lxxxv. 8.—R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 57.

Psalm lxxxv., ver. 10.—"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

STRICT regard for rule is of the essence of righteousness. It is by the revelation of law that God awakens in us the sentiment of righteousness; by His undeviating adherence to law that sentiment is stimulated and confirmed. The essence of tenderness is regard for persons. Love contemplates the wants of living beings, and seeks to supply them. God is righteous; He is moved and controlled by regard for what is right. God is love; He is moved and swayed by regard for all His creatures. It is God's object to bring us to the joyful discovery, wherein we rest for time and for eternity, that His regard for right and His regard for us are at one; that tenderness and righteousness are in harmony; that all the opposition is in our ignorance, our perverted feeling; that the strictest rule is the truest tenderness. Consider some of the ways in which God reveals this to us.

I. Parental rule is one of these ways. The government of every pious household is in measure a revelation of the government of God. We have all a child's hold on God's affections, all a child's need of discipline and correction, all a child's power to grieve Him; and He has all a father's kind determination to train us in right.

II. The tenderness of God's strict rule is revealed to us again in the experience of life. We find that the dearest love may mislead and ruin; unregulated affection is a shameful and destructive thing. Regard for right is the truest personal regard. God would shield men from woes unnumbered, and therefore has He made His laws so severe and certain, and therefore does He subdue us to His laws.

III. This revelation, again, is granted in prayer. One of the great ends of prayer is to reveal to us the tenderness of God. The order of human life, with its partings and its pains, the law by which we suffer, appears to us in a new aspect. God's mercy is seen not in interfering for our sakes with the order of His providence; that order is itself most merciful. God's tenderness is revealed not in saving us from tribulation, but in saving us by tribulation.

IV. The tenderness of God's strict law is revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ. It is personal regard for man which we see pre-eminently in Jesus, yet who so much as He makes us feel the constraining bond of righteousness? He delivers men from the penalties of law; but it is to awaken in them a

reverence for it, deeper and more solemn than any experience of penalty can be. He frees them from its pains by transforming its painfulness into an entire devotion to it. There dawns upon us the overwhelming conception that surrounding law is surrounding love; that law is the highest expression of love.

V. The closing verses of the Psalm declare the blessed effects of this discovery in a true and fruitful, in a trusting, an intelligent and obedient life, in a life hallowed by God's smile and crowned with His constant benediction.

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 57.

REFERENCE: lxxxv. 10, 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 143.

Psalm lxxxv., vers. 10-13.—"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other," etc.

THESE four verses are a fourfold picture of how heaven and earth ought to blend and harmonise.

I. Take the first verse: "Mercy and truth are met together," etc. We have here the heavenly twin sisters, and the earthly pair that corresponds. Mercy and Truth, two radiant angels, like virgins in some solemn choric dance, linked hand in hand, issue from the sanctuary and move amongst the dim haunts of men, making "a sunshine in a shady place;" and to them there come forth, linked in a sweet embrace, another pair, whose lives depend on the lives of their elder and heavenly sisters: Righteousness and Peace. (1) In man's experience righteousness and peace cannot be rent apart. (2) Righteousness and her twin sister Peace only come in the measure in which the mercy and the truth of God are received into thankful hearts.

II. In the eleventh verse—"Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven"—we have God responding to man's truth. (1) Man's truth shall begin to grow and blossom in answer, as it were, to God's truth that came down upon it. (2) Righteousness shall look down from heaven, not in its judicial aspect merely, but as the perfect moral purity that belongs to the Divine nature, which shall bend down a loving eye upon the men beneath and mark the springings of any imperfect good and thankfulness in our hearts.

III. Then there is the third aspect of the ideal relation between earth and heaven set forth in the next verse: "Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase;" that is to say, man responding to God's gift.

The great truth is here developed that earthly fruitfulness is possible only by the reception of heavenly gifts.

IV. The last phase of the fourfold representation of the ideal relation between earth and heaven is, "Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps;" that is to say, God teaching man to walk in His footsteps. Man may walk in God's ways, not only in the ways that please Him, but in the ways that are like Him. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 15.

Psalm lxxxvi., vers. 1-5.—"Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy," etc.

THE fulness and variety of these petitions deserve careful consideration.

Notice: I. The invocations. Five times in these verses of the text does the Psalmist invoke God, and that by three several names: "Jehovah," "my God," "Lord." (1) "Jehovah." The word implies eternal, timeless being, underived self-existence. It was given as the seal of the covenant, as the ground of the great deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The national existence rested upon it. The vitality of Israel was guaranteed by the eternity of Israel's God. (2) "My God." The word implies the abundance and fulness of power, and so may be found, and often is found, on the lips of heathens. It contemplates the almightiness rather than the moral attributes or covenant relations of God as the ground of our hopes. This general conception becomes special on the Psalmist's lips by the little word which he prefixes to it: "*my* God." (3) The word "Lord" is not, as a mere English reader might suppose, the same word as that which is rendered "Lord" in the first verse. That is "Jehovah." This means just what our English word "lord" means: it conveys the general idea of authority and dominion.

II. The petitions which these verses give us. They are all substantially the same, and yet they so vary as to suggest how familiar all the aspects of the deliverance that the Psalmist desired were to him. (1) There is, first, the cry that God would hear, the basis of all that follows. Then there is a threefold description of the process of deliverance: "preserve," "save," "be merciful." Then there is a longing for

that which comes after the help, a consequence of the hearing: "Make the soul of Thy servant glad."

III. The pleas on which these petitions are based. (1) The Psalmist pleads his necessities. He is "poor and needy," borne down by the pressure of outward calamity, and destitute of inward resources. (2) He pleads his relation to God and his longing for communion with Him. "I am holy." The word simply means "one who is a recipient or object of mercy." The plea is drawn, not from the righteousness of the man, but from the mercy of God. (3) Finally, because our necessities and our desires derive their force as pleas from God's own character, he urges that as his last and mightiest appeal. The name of God is the ground of all our hope, and the motive for all His mercy.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 257.

IN this passage we are looking at one of God's saints in the holiest of all, in the immediate presence of his God and King.

I. The first thought that strikes us is, David takes his right place. He says, "Bow down," as though he would say, "I am a worm, and no man." I cannot claim an audience. If Thou wouldst hear, Thou must bow down Thine ear, as a tender Father, to catch what Thy frail child has to say.

II. Look at the "fors" of the passage. There are five. (1) "For I am poor and needy." If we come to God at all, we must come as beggars. There are two words in the Greek language which indicate poverty. One indicates respectable poverty, the poverty of a man in humble circumstances, who is working hard to get his bread. The other signifies "beggary," the state of the man who has got nothing, who is utterly bankrupt. In describing the particular kind of poverty-stricken people He receives, our Lord uses the word to indicate abject bankruptcy; and unless we come into the Divine presence in the position of paupers, we cannot get the blessing. (2) Notice the second "for:" "Preserve my soul, *for* I am holy." The first "for" is the "for" of the bankrupt; the second is the "for" of the saint. There is no contradiction here: in my own moral character a poor beggar, grovelling in the dust; in God's own Divine purpose something nobler than the bright spirits that stand around His throne, heir of God and joint heir with Christ, bound to the everlasting Deity by

indissoluble bonds. (3) "Be merciful unto me, O Lord, *for* I cry unto Thee daily." This third "for" points out to us what is to be the law of our life. If we want to be kept in constant safety, we must be calling unto Him "daily." (4) "Rejoice the soul of Thy servant, *for* unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." The Psalmist begins by asking the Lord to "bow down His ear unto him," but he goes on till he gets to such a point of believing expectation that he dares to lift up his soul into the presence of God. It is lifted up in order that it may become a partaker of God's joy. God is the centre of eternal joy. "At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' (5) "For Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee." We are so poor in our mercy. The richness of God's mercy lies in this point: the Lord never gives a mercy till He has taken care that it shall be a real mercy. His favours shall only be received by those who will take them in His own way, and thus the blessing is doubled.

W. HAY AITKEN, *Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 220.
REFERENCE: lxxxvi. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 248.

Psalm lxxxvi., ver. 9.—**"All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy name."**

THIS Psalm is not usually numbered, but it might well be, amongst the penitential psalms. Its pensiveness is that of contrition. From the Divine attributes which it accentuates, and from its expressions, as well as from the tone that runs through it, we see a tender conscience, healed and lowly, sensible of fault, rejoicing in forgiveness. The Psalmist dwells on God's mercy, on His longsuffering, on His readiness to forgive, as only they dwell who have the broken and contrite heart.

I. Observe that wherever you find contrition you find a light peculiarly its own, an unusual brightness, a lofty hope, a vision of God amazing in its clearness, and a vision of man remarkable for its brightness and its faith. We cannot by searching find out God, but we can by trusting.

II. Observe the hope which is expressed in the text, "All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee.' It is a great dream; it is a dream of universal religion—one creed for every variety of man, in all conditions, in all stages of civilisation; one vision of God to charm them; one song of praise and triumph rising over all mankind. Concerning this hope, we remark: (1) that all the holy have cherished it;

(2) that it has been marvellously realised in the history of the world in the past; (3) that it is a consummation devoutly to be wished. (4) Think what might have been accomplished already if the Church had done her work.

III. Notice the lessons which these things enforce. (1) Let us repent of our despair and believe in the truth of God; (2) let us repent of the little we have done to speed forward the work; (3) let us labour at home and abroad, expecting not failure, but the thirty-fold, the sixty-fold, the hundred-fold, promised by our Lord.

R. GLOVER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 260.

Psalm lxxxvi., ver. 11.—"Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name."

IN the expressions "teach," "fear," "walk," we have religion presented to us in the three aspects of knowledge, feeling, and conduct; in other words, religion in the head, in the heart, and in the feet. Religion affects the whole circle of man's activity. As *knowledge*, it illumines his intellect or guides his thinking in relation to those matters of which religion takes cognisance; as *feeling*, it awakens right promptings within him in relation to those matters; as *conduct*, it furnishes rules for his doing.

I. Religion as a matter of knowledge, a process of instruction. "Teach me Thy way, O Lord." (1) The Teacher: "the Lord." Religious illumination comes from God, the Father of lights. He graciously assumes the character of Teacher to men in the way of salvation. To this end He has provided for them a great lesson-book, none other than the Bible. When we read this book, we sit, in effect, like Mary of old, at the feet of the Divine Teacher to learn "His way." (2) The learner: man. Man displays the first essential of a true learner: a keen desire for his lesson. The scholar casts himself at the feet of his Divine Teacher, and entreats to be taught. Meekness and fear—that is, docility and reverence—are qualities in the pupil which unlock the secrets of the Divine heart.

II. Religion in the heart, or religion as a matter of feeling. Religion here has made its way from the head into the heart; from the light of knowledge it has become the warmth of emotion. The particular emotion into which the knowledge develops is fear. (1) This is not fear in the sense of terror or dismay, but love. It is heart-fear, not conscience-fear. It is the child-disposition, sweet, trustful, and penetrated with holy, subduing reverence. (2) The condition of its development.

The essential condition of this beautiful disposition is a heart at peace with all its passions, in thorough harmony with God.

III. Religion in the life, or as a matter of conduct. Divine truth is first light in relation to men; this truth or light received into the hearts of men becomes converted into love; and this love becomes a mighty propelling force, impelling them irresistibly along the line of truth and righteousness.

A. J. PARRY, *Phases of Christian Truth*, p. 158.

Psalm lxxxvi., ver. 11.—"Unite my heart to fear Thy name."

THIS prayer begins with a general request, and then points it to a particular object: "Unite my heart"—make it one; and for what?—"to fear Thy name."

I. "Unite my heart." Who that knows the fickleness and inconsistency of the human character, of his own character, will not join in this prayer? Anything is better for a man than a distracted, unharmonised, inconsistent character. To spend precious time in counteracting and crossing out ourselves is more than any of us can afford in this short life, in which so much is to be done. One very prevailing form of this inconsistency is a trifling, wavering, inconstant spirit, the standing idle in the market-place of the world of a man who has not yet found his vineyard to work in, or who, having found it, is weary of the work. It is very often incident to youth and inexperience. With the young especially one of the first conditions of unity of heart is a humble and conscientious adoption of opinions. Do not entangle yourselves, in the battle before you, with armour which you have not proved. Better defence to you will be the simple sling and stone of one conviction tried by your own experience than all the panoply of Saul.

II. While on this matter, it seems in the course of our subject to put in a warning against two mistaken lines of conduct which we see around us: (1) a listless apathy to the formation and expression of opinion; a carrying out of an idea that a man may be consistent by being nothing. It is not thus that we pray that our hearts may be united. Better even be inconsistent among the energies of life than faultless, because motionless, in the slumbers of death. (2) The other alternative is that of cherishing an artificial consistency, for mere consistency's sake. It is lamentable to see men punctiliously upholding an accredited opinion which we have reason to know they do not themselves hold. It is by such men and such lives that mighty systems of wrong have grown up under the semblance of right; it is in

spite of such men that the God of truth has broken these systems to pieces one after another, and has strewn the history of His world with the wrecks of these fair-seeming fabrics.

III. "Unite my heart *to fear Thy name*." If we would be consistent men, God must be first in everything. (1) If this is so, the first consequence will be that our motives will be consistent. The fear of God will abide as a purifying influence in the very centre of our springs of action, His eye ever looking on us, His benefits ever constraining us. (2) Union of the heart in God's fear will save us from grievous or fatal inconsistency in opinion. He whose heart is united to fear his God, though not exempt from other men's failings, is saved from other men's recklessness, and has a tenderer and a safer conscience in the matter of forming and holding opinion.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 256.

Psalm lxxxvi., ver. 17.—"Show me a token for good."

I. "SHOW me a token for good." The want thus expressed is a spiritual want; the prayer therefore is for spiritual relief. It is a token of love to his soul, a token of spiritual and eternal good, for which the Psalmist prays.

II. Suppose that some particular tendency of our evil nature has long held us in bondage, and that we are conscious of what the Apostle calls "a sin which easily besets us." What in such a case would be the right use of the words before us? Surely they should suggest to us an earnest prayer to God to show us one of His special tokens, to encourage our weak faith, to animate our feeble efforts, by a season of unwonted success—I mean by enabling us but for once so to overcome our sin, that we may see for ourselves how near help really is, and how surely He hears our prayers.

III. It may be said indeed, and said truly, that such tokens ought not to be needed. We must beware of perverting the text so as to suppose that our Christian faith is to be built upon so unstable a foundation as the impressions and feelings of our own minds, or that our struggles with evil can safely be postponed until some such special help be vouchsafed to us.

IV. The time, and the manner, and the degree of our comfort in spiritual things, as in earthly, must be left implicitly at God's disposal. While this is remembered and confessed, the prayer of the Psalmist is safe and wise. What God desires is that we should seek our happiness in Him; and then He sets no bounds to prayer or expectation.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 223.

Psalm lxxxvi., ver. 17.—"Thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me."

I. Look, first, at Divine help. "Thou, Lord, hast holpen me!" (1) It is in the very nature and disposition of God to give help. (2) Sin is a hindrance to our reception of Divine help, but for the removal of this obstacle God has made a large provision in the redemption which He has provided. (3) God's ability to help is perfect, and His resources unlimited, almighty. (4) God helps by various agencies; and these are chosen by His own wisdom, superintended by His own eye, and made efficient by His own power. (5) God helps us individually. (6) God helps us perfectly and efficiently.

II. Look, next, at godly consolation. "Thou hast comforted me." (1) God comforts by the undergrowth of small alleviations in trouble. (2) God comforts by calling our attention to some solace present with us which we have overlooked. (3) God comforts us by revelations of a bright future. (4) God comforts us *in* trouble, and He comforts us by taking away trouble. (5) God comforts us by the direct action of His mind upon our mind; by His word, especially by His word of promise; and by our fellow-men, especially by our fellow-Christians. (6) God comforts us by drawing us near to Himself. (7) God gives help and comfort from the sanctuary.

S. Martin, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 120.

References: lxxxvi. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1559. lxxxvii. 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 249. lxxxvii. 3.—A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, p. 349. lxxxvii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 382. lxxxvii.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 134.

Psalm lxxxviii., ver. 1 (Prayer-book version).—"O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee: O let my prayer enter into Thy presence, incline Thine ear unto my calling."

This Psalm is written under feelings of affliction and deep heaviness of spirit. But its peculiarity is not that it is written under these feelings, but that these feelings are never once interrupted or relieved throughout it. Other psalms are expressions of grief, but they rise to joy eventually. This Psalm never rises to joy. What is the reason of this peculiarity? The Psalm is designed to express one particular stage of consolation; viz., the earliest one of all, that which consists in the simple expression of the sorrow itself, only with this addition, that it expresses it as in the presence of God, and as an address to Him. All its expression indeed is that of grief; but

that very expression is only one stage of consolation. The grief is relieved by giving due and reverential vent to it. A surface of evil is accompanied by a reserve and undercurrent of hope, and a grief externally unchecked proceeds upon an understanding that it is seen and compassionated by One who is able to remove it.

I. Such a psalm is wanted, as being the representation of one particular stage and form of consolation in affliction.

II. This stage of consolation has its own peculiar and characteristic graces, which entitle it to such recognition. The earlier stages of consolation are nearer the beginning of things, closer to the fountain-head. In them the simple voice of Divine love speaks before man has yet added anything of his own strength and effort to it. The greatest victories of reason or of faith do not point so directly or so immediately to the one source of all consolation as that first stage and beginning of it which consists in the soul's simple expression of its grief, and no more.

III. This Psalm reminds us of a great truth respecting this dispensation of things. The world does not contain much positive and pure happiness, and the satisfactions it does supply are rather of a secondary sort, remedial to dissatisfaction. Let us be content with moderate, with secondary, satisfactions. A remedial system, if it is solid and effective, is not to be underrated, as if it were not worth enjoying. Let us bear affliction with a single view to greater self-control, more resignation, more humility, ever strongly impressed with the great utility and serviceableness of it, the impossibility of growing in grace without it.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 52.

REFERENCES: lxxxviii. 1, 3.—Bishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876, p. 133. lxxxviii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1090.

Psalm lxxxviii., ver. 5.—"Free among the dead."

THE freedom of which the author of this Psalm writes so despairingly must have been, for him at least, a freedom of isolation, of solitariness, of exile and expulsion, rather than of release, independence, and joy.

I. We are all conscious of the possibility of a freedom which should have nothing in it either of comfort or honour. (1) "Free among the dead" will have no cheerful sound if it be taken to mean, as probably the psalmist meant it, cast out of the sight of God, forsaken by the Divine superintendence, left

to shift for himself in a world of shadowy forms and unsubstantial existences. Such freedom would be worse than any bondage. (2) There is a freedom, akin to the former, which is the loss of all employment and society, some one else filling your place and discharging your duties because an incurable sickness has stricken you, and that idleness which is the paradise of the dunce or the fool is put upon you, without and against your will, for the welfare of others, by the visitation of God. If this was the freedom of the dead as nature or fancy painted it to the psalmist, can we wonder that he used it as the synonym rather of misery than of repose?

II. Read now in the light of Jesus Christ, what shall the text become? (1) "He that is dead is freed from sin." Free among the dead is, first and above all, free from sin. (2) Jesus Christ said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." The word "straitened" is the direct opposite of this "free among the dead." Freedom among the dead was His emancipation from the "straitness" of earth. We, too, may make the words our comfort as we think of the departed, and our hope in the anticipation of a state which shall be our own.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, p. 288.

Psalm lxxxviii., vers. 15, 16.—"I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer Thy terrors I am distracted," etc.

WHAT is it that the psalmist declares of himself in these words but that God's judgments have always and habitually possessed his mind; that the fear of them has hung like a weight upon him; that even from his youth it has been present with him? If we look into any books of prayers or meditations of good men, the same feeling presents itself; we meet with expressions of sorrow and uneasiness under the consciousness of sin, as if sin were an evil no less real to them than we would conceive of some severe and continued bodily pain. It is this feeling which appears to me to be so commonly wanting amongst us.

I. The feeling of thinking lightly of sin is one of the evils which seem to accompany naturally what is called a state of high civilisation. As all things about us are softened, so are our judgments of our own souls.

II. We all fancy that if we were to commit any great crime, we should feel it very deeply, that we should be at once ashamed and afraid and should be dreading God's judgments. As it is our faults are mostly in what we call little things; that is, in

things which human law would scarcely punish at all, and which do not produce serious worldly loss or suffering to any one. We seem to fancy that in God's sight the actions of our lives are blank; that they are things altogether too trifling for Him to notice; that He does not regard them at all.

III. St. Paul says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It is no exaggeration, then, but the simple truth, that our sins are more in number than the hairs of our head; and it might well be the case that, looking at all this vast number, and remembering God's judgments, our hearts, as the psalmist says of himself, should fail us for fear. Remember that so many waking hours as we have in each day, so many hours have we of sin or of holiness; every hour delivers in, and must deliver, its record: and everything so recorded is placed either on one side of the fatal line or on the other; it is charged to our great account of good or of evil.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 106.

Psalm lxxxviii., ver. 18.—"Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness."

I. LOOK at the threefold loss bewailed in the text. There are, or ought to be, three circles round every man like the belts or rings round a planet: love, friendship, and acquaintanceship. Love is the nearest, while, at the same time, it lends its value to the other two. Friendship and acquaintanceship have no real pith, or substance, or value in them except as they are permeated by the spirit of the nearest circle. The three circles are needed by every man for the proper health and balance of his nature. No man suffices for himself. He needs others, as they need him. In proportion to the number and closeness of the ties in life is the pain in reserve for men. Strange life this, in which our best is the most subject to suffering, and pays a penalty as if it were the worst!

II. Reflections. (1) The thinking of departed friends will help us to realise our own death. It is of the highest moment that we should realise death, for without this we do not realise eternity, sin, or God. (2) Thinking of our departed will help to take away the bitterness of death. Death is but going as they have gone; it is just sharing with them. Death gets identified with the thought of father, or mother, or wife, or child; and we feel that we dare not and cannot shrink from going to them. (3) Thinking of the departed will enable us to realise immortality. One of the most effectual ways of bringing

the unseen world before us as solid reality is to think of some loved and familiar one who has gone into the eternal state. They live, these departed ones; if truth and love are real, they live. Death can no more touch their souls than the stormy waves can quench the stars. (4) Thinking of the departed will take away the besetting feeling of solitude connected with death. What a glow it sheds over the future! How rich and full it makes it to think of meeting again some who have gone before. Their horizon is wide now. They have had experience of which we cannot form even a conception; but we know that no distance of time, no range of knowledge, no height or depth of experience, can ever alter their love to us. (5) Thinking of the departed cannot but fill us with regret and penitence. The place of death may be the birthplace of eternal life. Hearts that have been hard to every other plea may be conquered and melted here, and from this spot rise to heaven.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 118.

REFERENCES: lxxxviii.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 123. lxxxix. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1565; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 166. lxxxix. 2.– *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 217; J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 99. lxxxix. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 674, and vol. xxii., No. 1314.

Psalm lxxxix., ver. 15.—"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance."

THE blessing is not in the sound, but in the soul. It is the soul that knows the sound. Eloquence, that moves all hearts, is utterly unimpressive if the soul, capable of thinking and feeling, is not there. The same evangelisation spoke to the Hebrews in the tones of the silver trumpets as in our Christian service; it spoke to them of a family relationship with God, of a Mediator, of a Sacrifice, of worship of Him, the one only true God. It was joyful. It said, "Ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building."

I. It was a joyful sound. It proclaimed Divine ordinances; it said, "Sin and tyranny have not all dominion over you."

II. It was a joyful sound. It proclaimed the possibility of a deeper union with God. It is this joyful sound which thrills the spirit as with the trumpet-call to victory. This sound becomes a strong compulsion in the being, till the free nature exclaims, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

III. "They shall *walk*, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." They shall be blessed in the present enjoyment, knowing whom

they have believed, doing all for the glory of God. And how blessed is the anticipation, stirring the heart with even a deeper tide of joy, for the light of God's countenance shall not only be a present blessedness, but the source of yet brighter expectations.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 264.

REFERENCES: lxxxix. 15.—Spurgeon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 126; A. Maclaren, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 252; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 61; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 76. lxxxix. 16.—*Ibid.*, 1st series, p. 92. lxxxix. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 11; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 23. lxxxix. 37, 38.—E. H. Gifford, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 215.

Psalm lxxxix., ver. 47.—"Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?
Psalm xxxi., ver. 15.—"My times are in Thy hand."

I. THE temptation to believe that man is made in vain. Everything rebukes vanity in man, since he himself, as well as the world, is vain. The idea that man is made in vain is made common property, not at all by sameness of experience, but by the universal feeling that, whatever the experience may be, it leaves man infinitely remote from his desires. This thought is painfully impressed upon us when we survey that large range of characters to which we may give the denomination of wasted lives.

II. Notice the structure of the question, "Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?" Is it possible to reconcile the vanity of man with the greatness of God? (1) I believe that Thou hast not a chief regard to Thine own power. Power is but one of Thine attributes. Canst Thou sport with Thy power? Canst Thou create beauty merely to mar it? (2) I believe Thou art not inattentive to Thy creatures' desires, though they seem to be mocked. It is an everlasting chase; we never realise. "Why hast *Thou* made all men in vain?" (3) I believe Thou art Thyself a pure Being. Thus Thou canst not be pleased only to contemplate evanescence and decay. "Wherefore hast *Thou* made all men in vain?" These are the soliloquies and cries of our nature; and the appropriate answer to all is, Man is not made in vain. There is something in him which God does not regard as vanity. The whole of our education here is to raise us to the assurance that "He who made us with such large discourse, looking before and after," could not have made us in vain.

III. "My times are in Thy hand." God's real way is made up of all the ways of our life. The hand of Jesus is the hand

which rules our times. He regulates our life-clock. Christ is for and Christ in us. My life can be no more in vain than was my Saviour's life in vain.

IV. This truth rightly grasped and held, we shall never think it possible that any life can be unfulfilled which does not, by its own voluntary perversity, fling itself away.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 21.

REFERENCES: lxxxix. 47.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix, p. 321; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i., p. 203; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 21.

Psalm lxxxix., ver. 49.—"Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth?"

IT was on the morrow of the profound humiliation of Jerusalem by Shishak, and amidst the political and religious ruins which it had brought with it, that the eighty-ninth Psalm was written. The writer was an old servant and friend of the royal house: Ethan the Ezrahite. He was one of those wise men whose names are recorded as having been exceeded in wisdom by King Solomon, and had long taken part with Heman and Asaph in the Temple's services; and thus at this sad crisis of his history he pours out his soul in the pathetic and majestic Psalm before us, and of this psalm the keynote is to be found in the words, "Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth?"

I. "Where are Thy former lovingkindnesses?" As he sings Ethan looks around him, and his eye rests on a scene of degradation and ruin. He suffers as a patriot; he suffers as a religious man; he suffers as the descendants of the old Roman families suffered when they beheld Alaric and his hosts sacking the Eternal City. What had become of the lovingkindness of God, what of His faithfulness, what of His power? Ethan, in his report of the promise, answered his own difficulty. The covenant with David was not an absolute covenant. It depended upon conditions. There is a difference between the gifts of the Creator in the region of unconscious nature and His gifts in the region of free, self-determining will. The former are absolute gifts; the latter depend for their value and their virtue on the use that is made of them. The race of David was raised from among the shepherds of Bethlehem to reign over a great people upon conditions—conditions which were summed up in fidelity to Him who had done so much for it. Ethan himself states this supreme condition in the words of the Divine Author of the covenant: "If David's children

forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments, . . . then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their sin with scourges."

II. Ethan's cry has often been raised by pious men in the bad days of Christendom: "Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses?" And the answer is, "They are where they were." "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Now, as always, the promises of God to His people are largely conditioned. If the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, much short of this may happen as a consequence of the unfaithfulness of her members or her ministers. Of this let us be sure, that if God's promises seem to any to have failed, the fault lies not with Him, but with ourselves; it is we who have changed, not He. The cloud which issues from our furnaces of passion and self-will has overclouded for the moment the face of the sun; but beyond the cloud of smoke the sun still shines.

H. P. LIDDON, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 257 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 120).

REFERENCE: lxxxix. 49.—S. COX, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 138.

Psalm xc., ver. 1 (Prayer-book Version).—"Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another."

THIS is, beyond fair doubt, the oldest Psalm in the whole Psalter. It is the work, not of David, but, as the inscription tells us in the Bible version, of Moses. Especially like Moses is the union of melancholy and fervour which meets us here—the fervour of the intrepid servant of God dashed by the melancholy which followed on his great disappointments. In this verse he is the spokesman and representative of all that is good and great in the past annals of mankind. He is speaking for the living; he is speaking also for the dead. The spiritual experience which these words represent is continually deeper and wider; and they are repeated at this moment by more souls in heaven and earth than ever before—souls which have found in them the motto and the secret of life, whether in struggle or in victory—"Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another."

I. "Our refuge." In the Bible version more accurately it is "our dwelling-place." God is the home of the soul of man. The soul finds in the presence of God a protection against the enemies which threaten it with ruin in the rough life of the outer world. In this sense David cries, "I will love Thee,

O Lord, my strength." Besides this idea of protection from evils without, the word suggests a place where care is thrown aside, where the affections expand themselves freely and fully, where loving looks, and kindly words, and gentle deeds are the order of the day. When God is said to be the refuge or the home of man, it is meant that God gives to man his best and tenderest welcome, that God alone is the Being in whom man finds perfect repose and satisfaction for all the faculties and sympathies of his nature.

II. Contrast this idea of the relation between God and the man's soul with the three fundamental relations in which we men stand to Him as our Maker, our Preserver, and the end or object of our existence. Here in this word "refuge" or "home" we have another and a much more tender relation of God to the human soul. He who bade us be, He who keeps us in being, He towards whom our whole being should tend, is also our true and lasting resting-place. He is the one Being within whose life we can find and make a lasting home.

III. "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge." This is the spirit of the very noblest occupation in which we can engage; it is the spirit of prayer. This acknowledgment underlies all the forms which the soul's intercourse with God is wont to take. Prayer is always, in its widest sense, an act by which the soul of man, here amid these changing scenes of time, seeks its true home and resting-place in seeking God. And as such it always ennobles men, not less now than in the earliest days of man's history. Our gilded civilisation is no sort of protection against the widespread misery around us, "the changes and chances of this mortal life," which are the lot of us all. The realities of life force us to look beyond it, to cry, with Moses, "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another."

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 920.

REFERENCES: xc. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 46; M. B. Riddle, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 324.

Psalm xc., vers. 1, 2.

SCRIPTURE certainly emphasises in many places the frail and fleeting aspect of life; the thought of man's mortality runs as a wail through many a psalm, and touches with pathos the heart of the prophet in his brightest visions. But then there is always in Scripture another side of the picture; and this is the higher, and in the sense of Scripture the truer, side. The good is the original, the substantive of which evil is the

inversion. The good is being; the evil is but negation of being.

I. This Psalm, so venerable in its materials that it has been attributed to Moses, is in the main a psalm of mortality; and yet its primary thought is not mortality, but eternity. It opens with the note of eternal being. The idea of the eternal stands as a great light in front of the darkness. Man is mortal, but God is; and God is the Eternal, the home, the dwelling-place, of all generations. This is the grand peculiarity of Hebrew and of Christian thought, that God is first, man only second; that the eternal Being is the true Being, the present visible or transitory being only the derivative being, appearing and then vanishing away, according to the direction of the other.

II. But there is more in this brief word than the general assertion of eternal being, and of a great primary power directing, controlling, all nature and all life. The character of this Being is further so far defined. It is represented not only that God is, but that He is personal. The idea of God is everywhere noted by the personal pronouns "I;" "Thou;" "I am that I am;" "I am the Lord, and there is none else." The word "personality" simply means that God is moral; that He is a character as well as an energy; that He is a Being full of affection, and care, and thoughtful and deliberate love. He is not only Creator: He is Father. The assurance is that we have a supreme Heart above us, responsive to our hearts; that there is a spiritual home encompassing us, a life that changes not with the varying pulses of our thought and feeling.

J. TULLOCH, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 297.

REFERENCES: xc. 1, 2.—A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, p. 35. xc. 1-12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 59. xc. 2.—A. Mursell, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 131.

Psalm xc., ver. 3.—"Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men."

Two of the greatest lessons which Christ came to teach us were the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Look at man in himself, look at man as he makes himself by yielding to and aiding in the fraud and malice of the devil, and hardly any language can be too bitter to describe his baseness and his degradation. But look at man in the light of revelation; look at him under the triple, overarching rainbow of faith, hope, and love; look at him ransomed and ennobled into filial relationship with God, and you will see at once where men have learnt their high faith in their own being and the

dignity of God's image upon them, and who it is that has taught them to speak in such noble accents about themselves. To lose faith in man is to lose faith in God, who made him; to lose faith in man's nature is to lose faith in your own. Notice some rules by which we may hold fast our faith in all human nature, and so help, it may be, to ameliorate the race.

I. Let us believe, or try to believe, that there is a good side in every man.

II. Let us sometimes turn away altogether from the thoughts of bad men to the galaxy of heavens wherein shine the clustered constellations of saintly lives. Read the lives and actions of these children of light.

III. Above all, as the best of all rules, think constantly of Christ, and fix your eye on Him. The only measure of a perfect man is the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

IV. The most sure way to justify our faith and hope in human nature is to justify it in ourselves. We can do this; we can do all things through Christ, that strengthens us.

F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 321.

References: xc. 3, 4.—Archbishop Thomson, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 1. xc. 4.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 11.

Psalm xc., vers. 7-17.—"For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled," etc.

I. In this passage we find: (1) an exercise of penitential faith or believing repentance; (2) an exercise of believing appropriation and assurance.

II. The three petitions in vers. 16 and 17 point to work or entering into work as being the peaceable fruit of righteousness. (1) The Lord's work comes first. These praying men of God, penitent and believing, ask Him to give them and their children a sight of that and an insight into its glory. (2) The second petition is a prayer for personal holiness. It represents that holiness as being intimately connected on the one hand with the Lord's causing His work and His glory in it to appear unto us, and on the other hand with our being enabled so to work ourselves as to warrant our asking God to establish the work of our hands. (3) In virtue of the Divine blessing, the work of these men acquires a character of stability, permanence, endurance, contrasting strangely with the vanity of their wilderness state.

R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 209.

Reference: xc. 8.—C. Short, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 150.

Psalm xc., ver. 9.—"We spend our years as a tale that is told."

No part of the ancient Scriptures is less obsolete than this Psalm. It is a picture still true to nature. Human life, viewed generally, has not since brightened up into a scene of joy and triumph. The text seems to express both a necessary fact and a censure. The rapid consumption of our years, their speedy passing away, is inevitable. But they may be spent also in a trifling manner, to little valuable purpose, which would complete the disconsolate reflection on them by the addition of guilt and censure.

I. The instruction supplied by all our years has been to little purpose if we are not become fully aware of one plain fact: that which was expressed in our Lord's sentence, "Without Me ye can do nothing;" in other words, that it is only through the medium of God that we can effectually attempt any of the most important things, because we have a nature that is unadapted to them, repugnant to them, revolts from them. Therefore, if during the past year we failed in the essential point of imploring the Divine Spirit to animate us, well might we fail in the rest.

II. Sentiments of a grateful kind should be among the first to arise in every one's meditation on the past year. If we have no right estimate and feeling for the past mercies of God, how are we to receive present and future ones with a right feeling? For future duty we shall want to have motives. Think, if all the force that should be motive could be drawn, in the form of gratitude, from one year's mercies of God and, as it were, converged to a point, what a potent motive that would be! We have to look back over the year to collect this force.

III. Another consideration is that our last year has added to an irrevocable account. It has passed into the record of heaven, into the memory of God.

IV. Our year has been parallel to that of those persons who have made the noblest use of it. Why were the day, the week, the month, of less value in our hands than in theirs?

V. Another reflection may be on our further experience of mortal life and the world. We have seen it, tried it, judged it, thus much longer. Our interest upon it is contracted to so much narrower a breadth. At first we held to life by each year of the whole allotment; but each year withdrawn cut that tie, like the cutting in succession of each of the spreading roots of a tree. There should in spirit and feeling be a degree of detachment in proportion.

VI. The year departed may admonish us of the strange deceptiveness, the stealthiness, of the flight of time. Each period and portion of time should be entered on with emphatically imploring our God to save us from spending it in vain.

J. Foster, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 292.

References: xc. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 354; A. Raleigh, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 379; R. D. B Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 1st series, p. 299.

Psalm xc., ver. 10.—"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow."

It is a paradox, and yet, like many other paradoxes, a truism also, to say that death generally alters, sometimes reverses, the whole estimate of a life. It will scarcely be doubted that in such cases the second judgment, if not absolutely just, is the more just in comparison. The true judgment is the ultimate, not the intermediate. This is a difference real and practical for us the living. If the presence or absence of certain qualities or principles is to make a life good or evil, honourable or of ill report, in the retrospect of it from the graveside or from the judgment-seat, what ought it to be now? How shall we so live now as to be pronounced then to have lived the right life? Take, out of a multitude, three characteristics.

I. Disinterestedness. When the criterion of this Psalm is applied to any life, we shall see at once that it must be fatal to a selfish life. Disinterestedness is the first condition of the everlasting man. He sees himself one link, a very insignificant link, in a chain which binds together two eternities. He cannot fall down and worship the link. He must be true, he must be righteous, or he breaks the chain. For the chain is let down from the throne of God, and it fastens together—unintelligible else the union—God the Creator and God the Judge.

II. The second condition of an immortal life is that it is religious. In general it is the religious man who survives death. I believe that when death is once past, even earth is just. I believe that earth itself does homage only to dead saints. When ambition is in the dust, history appreciates virtue, applauds faith. The life that is to live after death, whether on earth or in heaven, must be a religious, a Christian, life.

III. The life which earth shall immortalize is a life not of power so much, but of love. We are all by nature worshippers, idolaters, bondmen, of power. It is not power, not wit, not

genius, still less success of office or honour, it is love, which makes a man immortal. For his love's sake, for his tenderness, for his sympathy, you will forgive him many a fault and many a shortcoming; you will retain his memory long as life lasts for that one word, that one line, that one look, which told you that he understood you, that he felt for you, that he was your friend.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words of Hope*, p. 206.

Psalm xc., ver. 11.—"Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath."

I. WHEN I consider the difficulties which lie in the way of our measuring the anger of God, I conclude that it is chiefly His steady and orderly goodness which has thrust His displeasure out of sight. So far as one can see from the present arrangements of the world, it is God's way to withdraw for the most part from our view the sterner features of His character, while He puts forward and emphasises everywhere His gracious and fruitful goodness. (1) The mere power or strength of God is itself rather concealed than thrust upon us. It hides itself behind the order within which He is pleased to exert it. (2) The extent to which God's strength might come to be at the service of His anger, and be used by Him to destroy, is still more closely veiled from us by the uniform beneficence of His creation. Only occasionally does nature suggest wrath. Her deliberate arrangements are all inspired by goodness. (3) The experience which we have had of God in our own lives is to the same effect; our bitter days we count upon our fingers, our happier ones by years. Judgment is God's strange work; but His tender mercies are over all His works.

II. By what line shall we fathom the unknown severity of Jehovah? Seeing that God intends His latent wrath to remain as yet concealed from us and hath Himself been at pains to conceal it, by what means shall we search it out? The writer of this Psalm puts into our hand a standard of comparison which, though insufficient, is at least approximative. The wrath of God, he says, is "according to His fear;" to His fearfulness, that is, or His fitness for inspiring in the bosoms of men an awful and sacred dread. Whatever suggests to our minds the enormous strength of God as against our weakness, suggests how terrific His wrath may be if He will. (1) Susceptible souls are sometimes under favourable conditions wrought to fear by the mere vastness, or mystery, or loneliness

of God's material works. According to this fear of Him, so is His wrath. (2) The mass of men are too unimaginative or too stupid to be much moved by the mere sublimity of God's every-day creation. They need occasional outbursts of unwonted violence to prick their hearts to fear Him. In their coward hearts terror suggests judgment; and according to His fear, so is to them His wrath. (3) In order to estimate the capacity of wrath in the Almighty, we need to know more than His strength, more than His material terribleness. One event in history expresses to the full the moral terribleness of God. The Passion of Jesus Christ is the crown of all terrible things, and the supreme measure not only of God's mercy, but quite as really of God's severity. According to His fearfulness, so is His wrath.

J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 205.

Reference: xc. 11.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2593.

Psalm xc., ver. 12.—"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The great mistake, perhaps, that people make when they reflect on the probable time they shall live in the body, is to think of their life on earth as the only life they have. We should not number our days in any such fashion as this. Time is to be regarded and prized not for the harvests that we reap, but for the seed-sowing that it enables us to do. Earthly life is not a unit; it is only a minute fraction of a unit. For the unit of being is so large that it has in it all opportunity, all occasion, all achievements, and all duration. The way to look at this life is to look at it as an opportunity to get started along the line of desirable progress, as a time to get rooted for a measureless growth, as a time to get initiated into the holy mysteries of existence and become familiar with some of its primary and essential commandments and virtues.

I. The way, therefore, to number our days is not to so number them that they seem to include the result of our lives, but to so number them that they seem to include simply the beginning of our lives. They and all they bring are only stepping-stones which lead us up to the threshold of a nobler life, nobler in its opportunities, occasions, and the character of its joy. We shall then see what life is worth and what it is not worth. We shall see what it should lead to and what we cannot afford to have it lead to. And seeing this, we shall apply our hearts unto wisdom.

II. Wisdom is a great word, because the idea it symbolises is great. Wisdom represents that finer power, that higher characteristic of mind, which suggests the proper application of facts, the right use of knowledge, the correct direction of our faculties. He whose heart is applied to wisdom has put himself in such a position that he can think divinely—think as God would think in his place.

III. Your greatest responsibility is yourself. The gravest charge you have to keep is the charge of your own soul. Life weaves us into the fabric of society. We are knitted and knotted with other lives. But death unthreads us from our connections. In the last day you will be responsible for yourself. Search, then, and see how you stand. The blunders of life do not kill. Let us remember that. Past follies do not forfeit future opportunity. God is always eager to give a man or woman one more chance. Heaven is never hopeless, never despairs touching man's ability to recover himself if he is down.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 157.

Psalm xc., ver. 12 (with 2 Kings xx., ver. 11).—"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

THE Bible is God's dial, by which we have to measure life.

I. The dial must be so placed as to receive the rays of the sun. Every line will then come into use.

II. The dial of Ahaz was a public instrument intended for all the people of Jerusalem. The Bible is for all.

III. Clouds would sometimes obscure the sun, and then the dial of Ahaz was in shadow. Clouds sometimes come between the mind and God's book, but the Sun of righteousness never sets, and there is a silver lining in the darkest cloud of the Christian's experience.

IV. The sun went backwards, and not forwards, on the dial of Ahaz, as a sign to King Hezekiah that he would get well again. With God all things are possible.

J. H. WILSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 24.

REFERENCES: xc. 12.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 2; E. J. Hardy, *Faint, yet Pursuing*, p. 159; R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 268; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 24; D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 68; *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 329. xc. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 513; C. J. Vaughan, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 66; J. H. Wilson, *The Gospel and its Fruits* (C.S.), p. 75; J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 125. xc. 15-17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1701.

Psalm xc., ver. 16.—"Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children."

THIS Psalm has a threefold interest: of subject, of authorship, and of association. It touches the most solemn, most momentous, most affecting point in the life of man. Its author is "Moses the man of God." It has been heard by us when standing in the presence of death.

I. The words of the text are in substance the prayer of Moses in Exodus, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." They find their echo in Philip's prayer on the night of the Passion, "Lord, show us the Father." They are the cry of a soul feeling its want of Him in whom, known or unknown, averse or loving, it must live, and move, and have its being.

II. "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants." "The Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Ill were it for the universe if the working hand were to rest one moment. God works everywhere and in all things, but man sees it not; it needs a separate work of God, as the text implies, to show His work. And therefore Moses prays this prayer for his people.

III. "And their children Thy glory." The glory spoken of is the self-manifestation of God. The far-reaching eye, the self-forgetting love, of the man who saw, but must not enter, the land of rest and of inheritance, looked onward into Israel's future, and while he prayed for the generation that was, thought also of the children that were yet unborn. "Show their children Thy glory," is a petition after the very heart of God, who takes it into the deepest and safest treasure-house of His own promises, and brings it forth thence in boundless blessing, when the lips which framed it have been silent for ages in death.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 46.

REFERENCE: xc. 16.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 208.

Psalm xc., vers. 16, 17 (Prayer-book version).—"Show Thy servants Thy work, and their children Thy glory."

I. THE prayer of the Psalmist is not the prayer of the wearied, disappointed prophet, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life," but the prayer of one who looks forward, of one who would fain build what will be continued by them that come after. "Show Thy servants Thy work, and their children Thy glory." Amid all that is fleeting and perishable, make us to know what *Thou* doest; and for our children we can ask no richer gift. The work of God is the glory of God.

II. The "work" of God and the "glory" of God are shown to us when we care to know that neither we nor our fellows are left alone in the world without a heavenly Friend and heavenly guidance, when we bring ourselves to believe, and to rejoice in the belief, that God Himself is acting on all these human hearts, urging them to turn to Him, and to love Him, and to seek the good of others by aiding others also to love Him more.

III. Then the concluding utterance follows naturally. Once let us believe in our hearts that God *is* working in the world, and then it becomes an axiom that *we* too, in our humble measure, have a work to do, a work lofty and ennobling because it is done for Him and with Him, because we are in truth admitted to very co-operation with God.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow School Sermons*, 1st series, p. 424.

REFERENCES: xc. 16, 17.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 241; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 51.

Psalm xc., ver. 17.—"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

I. WHAT is the beauty of God? The excellence of His character. The meaning of all beauty is to image the holiness and excellence of God. The perception of beauty has been given us not, as some suppose, for enjoyment merely, but to bind us to the infinite, to make it more difficult for man to lose himself in time and sense, and to woo him to a heavenly perfection. The beauty of God is His love, mercy, patience, faithfulness. The justice of God, too, which may well appear to sinful man only terrible, has truly a grand beauty. Viewed from a higher point, the terrible in God is the beautiful, for it is seen to be a form of love. Once in the history of this sinful world infinite beauty appeared. Once God contracted Himself into the limits of our nature and walked the earth. Divine loveliness spoke and acted among us, shone through the eyes and lived in the actions and sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. It is a perception of the beauty of God, a delight in it, a desire after it, which distinguish the spiritual man from others. They may feel that God is great and right; he feels that God is beautiful. A sense of the Divine beauty gives an elevation to all life, and clothes it with a certain infinite halo of gladness. Nothing can greatly afflict a soul that has a steady vision of the Divine beauty. Such a soul rises freely above temptation, heaven has entered into it, and it finds it easy to keep the road to heaven.

II. The beauty of God as reflected in man. The true beauty of God in man is not to be estimated at a glance. One must

take in the whole range of human nature. He must certainly not forget the relations to God, and to the future, and to men as spiritual beings. There is something sad about all mere natural beauty. Its forgetting of God is melancholy. Its blindness to the future and to all the height, and depth, and breadth of being is melancholy. There is always a suggestion of joy and hope about spiritual beauty. It speaks of a wide horizon. It is the beauty of a day in spring, having a hold of the future, while struggling with east winds and rain, looking on to summer, and not back upon it, as do the fairest autumn days. (1) *Benevolence* is the essential element of beauty. It is love that is lovely. (2) *Strength* is the natural and genuine root of love; and if there be anything fair to look upon that is not associated with this, but is rather a tender, delicate grace, inseparable from feebleness of principle or purpose, it must be somewhat of the nature of a sickly flush. (3) *Unity* is an element of beauty. Our nature must grow into unity by the power of a central life. (4) But unity must never be so understood as to seem in conflict with *freedom.* The beautiful is free, expansive, flowing. We are emancipated by the sight of God. The thought of eternity and infinitude takes away our limitation. (5) *Joy* is an element of beauty. The joy we get by looking to Christ is healing and softening. It is a joy from beholding beauty of the loftiest and tenderest kind, and must be productive of beauty. (6) *Repose* is not less an element of beauty. How powerfully this element of calm strikes us in the life of our Lord. Those who inherit His peace cannot but inherit something of His beauty. (7) *Naturalness and unconsciousness* must be added as necessary to all the elements of beauty. The beauty of life is life. We do not make beauty. It grows. We must not seek it directly, else we shall certainly miss it. J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 288.

References: xc. 17.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 273; A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 355.

Psalm xc.

This Psalm sets out with the definite statement of a theologic doctrine: the doctrine of the eternity of God.

I. This splendid thought of the Divine eternity is made to touch the shifting and inconstant character of our earthly state by the single word "dwelling-place." Here God's eternity opens itself to our needs.

II. A correct view of the eternity of God conveys warning as well as comfort. (1) The eternal power of God convicts

us of helplessness. (2) The eternal being of God convicts us of delusions. "Teach us to number our days," etc.

III. In vers. 7-10 man is represented not as unfortunate, but as *guilty*, not as the victim of accident, but as the subject of punishment.

IV. The last five verses bring us back to the starting-point of the Psalm. Whither shall a sinful, short-lived man flee but to a holy and eternal God? Thither turns the prayer of these last five verses, and turns with hope and confidence. Man is the subject of God's wrath, but there is mercy with Him to satisfy him who flees from the wrath to come.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 199.

REFERENCES: xc.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 361; F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 483.

Psalm xci., ver. 1.—"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

THESE are the words of one who had known almost more than any other man of the shafts of unkindness, and the arrows of death, and the cruel torments of life. None, probably, save only David's Son, ever equalled David in the degree in which he had passed through all the sympathies of our common nature. And this is his testimony, that in the midst of all there is a "place," a "secret place," as deep in its secrecy as God is high in His omnipotence, shadowed over by the hand of God.

I. What is meant by the secret place? The secret of the whole of the Old Testament is the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore to the mind of David—*i.e.*, in its first intention—the expression, "the secret place of the Most High," would certainly connect itself with Christ.

II. The Psalmist designates the man who "dwells" in the secret place. It is a beautiful idea—the man who has his home in Christ. It is to have Jesus all round us—our covering, our beauty, our defence, our rest.

III. Every promise has in it the dignity and the security of prophecy. "He shall abide." The image assures us of two things: (1) safety; (2) peace. He who refreshes himself in Christ has a refuge to which he can return again and again, and it is always there. It is the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 134.

REFERENCES: xci. 1.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 257. xci. 1, 2.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 227. xci. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1297. xci. 3.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii.,

No. 124. **xci. 4.**—*Ibid.*, vol. xv., No. 902. **xci. 11.**—*Clergyman's Magazine*, **vol. xv., p. 143**; J. H. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 372.

Psalm xci., vers. 1, 2.

THREE parties speak in this Psalm: the witness for God, the brother in peril, and God Himself.

I. The witness for God, the sympathising friend of the party exposed to danger, speaking from his own experience, declares generally, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (ver. 1, and see also ver. 9). Three lessons are taught in that inner school: (1) That God is true, true to Himself and true to you. (2) In your new dwelling-place you see the reward of the wicked. (3) You learn that there are members of the family not involved in your peril who yet are deeply and affectionately interested in your safety: "He shall give His angels charge over thee," etc.

II. The second party in this discourse and dialogue—the brother in peril—says very little. But the little which he does say is very comprehensive: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in Him will I trust" (ver. 2). It is a prompt response to the very first appeal made to him. It is the language not of faith only, but of love.

III. What God Himself is overheard to say at the close of the Psalm is the glorious corner-stone of this edifice of confidence. (1) Mark the cause assigned by the Lord for the warm interest which He feels in His servant thus exposed: "He has set his love upon Me; he has known My name." (2) Mark how the Lord speaks, connecting His servant's love to Him and knowledge of His name with His own purpose of deliverance and exaltation, as if His honour were concerned to make it plain that the love is not misplaced: "I will deliver him." (3) Mark what the Lord expects on the part of His servant: "He shall call upon Me." (4) Mark the assurance of the Lord's gracious interposition, answering to His servant's calling upon Him: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him," etc. (5) Nor is it to be all trouble with the man of God while he is fighting the good fight and finishing his course. Nay, there is so much enjoyment for him as to make him rather wish for its continuance, and welcome the concluding promise which he hears the Lord giving: "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation."

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 227.

REFERENCES: xci. 3.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 24.

xci. 5.—C. Kingsley, *Discipline, and Other Sermons*, p. 198; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 113. xci. 5-10.—R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 44. xci. 9.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 58. xci. 11.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 157. xci. 12.—H. Melvill, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. ii., p. 170.

Psalm xci., ver. 13.—"Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet."

THE definite promise, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the dragon," was a reference not only to reptiles and wild beasts of outward evil, but to evils in which the deadliness of vice is concentrated in our individual hearts: evil thoughts, and deeds, and habits which assail and hurt the soul. The fitness of the metaphor is shown by the fact that we find it also in the heathen mythology. The Greek type of a deliverer of the world was the hero Hercules. They saw, as we see, that he who would indeed conquer evil in the world must first conquer it in his own heart. The moral is finely conveyed in the legend of his conquest of the Nemæan lion. Every man's Nemæan lion lies in the way for him somewhere. All future victories depend upon that. Kill it, and through all the rest of your lives what was once terrible becomes your armour; you are clothed with the virtue of that conquest.

I. In the first place, this lion is to be fought in the darkness, and in the cavern, and with no earthly weapons. The lion is that inward sin, that special impulse and temptation to evil, which is most directed against your individual heart.

II. Observe the infinite superiority which Christ has granted to us in these days. The Greeks had noble ideals, but their conduct fell as far short of these ideals as ours does. But often these ideals were grievously corrupt. Human strength and knowledge are at the best but perfect weakness. But it is the mercy of God that He has given us in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ an ideal not human, but Divine.

III. Notice that the more early this battle is undertaken, the more surely it is won. He who strangles serpents in his youth slays monsters in his manhood. He who has early had strength to conquer temptations will not be so likely later to lose his self-reverence and his self-control.

F. W. FARRAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 33.

REFERENCES: xci. 14.—A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 233. xci.—M. G. Pearse, *Some Aspects of the Blessed Life*, pp. 81, 114. xcii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1138, xcii. 4.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 227. xcii. 5, 6.—F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 99. xcii, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix.,

No. 1122, and vol. xxviii., No. 1649. xcii. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 188. xcii. 13-15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1365; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 7. xciii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 325. xciii. 5.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 285; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 9.

Psalm xciv., ver. 9.—"He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"

We know what the eye and ear of man are, what it is to have the eye or ear of a friend near to us, or the eye and the ear of a master watching over us. What a difference does it make at once in all our thoughts and feelings! Especially suppose it is a friend or a master whom we love and reverence very much, what a vast difference does his presence make! It is only for want of due attention and consideration that we do not thus think of Almighty God at all times. For, as the Psalmist asks, "He that made the ear, shall He not hear? He that made the eye, shall He not see?"

Notice some points in which a reflection on the great truth which is contained in these words may be of use to us.

I. With regard to the many confusions that abound in the world, the manifold disorders of the times, which affect so seriously both the Church and nation, and perhaps every closer circle of life in which each of us is placed. What a reason for deep quietness of soul, for awful stillness and listening regard, is the consciousness of Him who is in the midst of us, though we see Him not!

II. The awful doctrine of God's omnipresent ear and eye may greatly assist us in the work of self-amendment. It is the thought of this which makes the saints of God always remarkable for profound humility. Whatever else there may be in common in good men, there never was a man accepted of God but that acceptance was in proportion to his humility.

III. As our ideas of God's knowledge and watchfulness are taken from the eyes and ears of men, so may we apply also to the same matter human affections also, which are often signified by these. Thus it is said that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." What is there in the world so encouraging, so consoling, so supporting, as the eye and ear of a friend? It was in thus looking upon God as their sure and present Friend that the faith of the patriarchs and of that noble army of martyrs, and prophets, and saints mentioned in the eleventh chapter of the

Epistle to the Hebrews consisted, in that, as is there said of Moses, they endured "as seeing Him who is invisible."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ii., p. 224.

REFERENCES: xciv. 9.—J. Culross, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 330. xciv. 10.—S. W. Skeffington, *Our Sins or our Saviour*, p. 183.

Psalm xciv., ver. 12.—"Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law."

I. THE highest love is marked by its severity, for the absolute condition of it is that it will never rest till it has lifted up the man whom it reaches to a level with itself. The lower love will often shrink from giving pain, nay will rightly do so unless it knows that the pain will purify, but not so the love of God. His love cannot be content to leave us to be mere creatures of our own appetites and passions, of the whim of the moment, or of the besetting sin which has fastened on our souls, or of a mere worldly purpose. There is no such thing as forgiveness without cleansing, and the cleansing is in itself the punishment of the sin which it cleans.

II. Human love must be controlled ever by such love as this. No human love is true which puts the lower above the higher, or drags down what it loves from the path of honour or of duty.

III. Those who have been most touched with a sense of this have not prayed to be spared, but rather the contrary. Anything, everything, is welcome to those men which makes them more and more the true sons of God, which refines them to that purity which they themselves delight in. So, too, do men most deeply feel what is the meaning of the death of Christ. He suffered for us, indeed, but that suffering is all strange to us till we begin to suffer too.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 39.

REFERENCES: xciv. 12.—E. Garbett, *The Soul's Life*, p. 144. xciv. 16.—H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 283; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 219. xciv. 19.—Spurgeon, Sermons, vol. xv., No. 883, and vol. xix., No. 1116. xciv.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 273.

Psalm xcv., ver. 6.—"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

THIS Psalm suggests a great many subjects of interest, but the point to which the text directs our attention is the import and bearing of its invitation to worship.

I. In the strictness of the word, adoration is the expression,

by an outward, but much more by an inward, act, of man's sincere conviction that his first duty to Almighty God is submission; and thus it is distinct from many other acts of the soul which are sometimes apt to be mistaken for it. (1) Contrast it, for example, with admiration. As admirers, we take it for granted that we are so far on a level with the object admired as to do Him justice; as admirers, we presuppose and exercise, although favourably, our rights as critics. In adoration we abandon all such pretensions as profane, as grotesque; we have no thought but that of God's solitary and awful greatness, and of our own utter insignificance before Him. (2) Thanksgiving, praise, and prayer for blessings all three differ from adoration in this, that in each of them the soul is less prostrate, more able to bear the thought of self, than in pure and simple adoration. Pure adoration has no heart for self; it lies silent at the foot of the throne, conscious only of two things: the insignificance of self, the greatness of God.

II. Notice some of the leading benefits of worship, which explain the importance which is assigned to it by the Church of Christ. (1) It places us, both as individuals and as a body of men, in our true place before God our Creator. (2) Worship obliges us to think what we are ourselves. (3) Worship is a stimulus to action when, and only when, it is sincere. If it be true that to work is to pray, it is no less true that to pray is to work. Prayer, in fact, is work, since it makes a large demand upon the energies of the will. Contact with the highest reality cannot but brace us, and we find in all ages that the noblest resolves to act or to suffer have again and again been formed as though in obedience to what seems a sudden overpowering flash of light during worship.

H. P. Liddon, *Family Churchman*, Aug. 18th, 1886 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 104).

The goodness, the power, the wisdom, the providence, the presence, of God are abundantly shown and manifested to us in all the works of the Creator. There is nothing in all these works that looks, as it were, the work of chance; all bear marks of care, and design, and adaptation of means to the end; all seem to say to the hearing ear, "The hand that made us is Divine." And it is to the worship of this Divine Head, it is to the acknowledgment of God as our Creator, that the text calls us. The contemplation of God's works is calculated: (1) to fill our souls with noble and worthy thoughts about God; and (2) to make us humble in our estimate of ourselves, as forming a

small part in these mighty works. These two things help to make accepted worship.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 176.

REFERENCES: xcv. 6.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 369; H. Hayman, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 119. xcv. 7, 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1551; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 204. xcv. 8.—G. Moberly, *Sermons in Winchester College*, 2nd series, p. 283. xcv.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 216. xcvi. 6.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 3rd series, p. 128. xcvi. 8.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 179.

Psalm xcvii., vers. 1, 2.—"The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

WE have set before us in this text: I. The fact of the Divine government of the universe. There is no *atheism* here: "the Lord." There is no *polytheism* here: "the Lord" —one. There is no *pantheism* here: "the Lord"—One different from the world that is ruled over. (1) The sacred singer here speaks of a God who exercises a personal agency in the universe. "The Lord reigneth." That implies power. (2) The psalmist suggests to us the fact that this personal agency of God is carried on in a regular and ordinary way. The words are, "The Lord *reigneth*;" and we read also in the passage of "His throne."

II. A second point is the mystery and awfulness of the Divine government. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." The symbol expresses three ideas: (1) the majesty, (2) the incomprehensibility, (3) the judgments, that characterise the Divine government.

III. The moral excellence of the Divine government. "Justice and judgment are the habitations of His throne."

IV. The feelings which a contemplation of this Divine government is fitted to excite. (1) There is first the feeling of awe and contrition. (2) There is the feeling of joy.

W. MORISON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 126.

REFERENCES: xcvii. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 308. xcvii. 2.—T. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 253. H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2603. xcvii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 208.

Psalm xcvii., ver. 11.—"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

NOTICE: I. That the present life is but a sowing-time to the righteous. (1) Now the text evidently teaches that light is sown by the righteous, and not only for them; yet, forasmuch

as evil and good work together in spiritual things, we may fairly regard the righteous as having to do with both. If they themselves are in one sense the ground, they themselves are in another the mere tillers and cultivators of the ground. They must sow light, and they shall also reap light. (2) It cannot justly be said that a man has light unless there has passed over him the great moral change of conversion. When, through the workings of the Spirit of God, a man is renewed, made to feel himself a sinner and to flee to Christ as a Saviour, he may justly be described as translated "out of darkness into marvellous light." The light falls on himself, on God, on the present and on the future. (3) Is this light perfect? It is thoroughly correct as far as it goes. It requires to be expanded, and is defective in nothing but compass. The future, as compared with the present, is the harvest-time as compared with the seedtime.

II. The more interesting trains of thought suggested by the passage follow from the supposition that God Himself is the Sower. We feel at once that there is something like a contradiction in this simile of the psalmist, because it would seem that light would cease to be light in being sown or hidden in the ground. But God can hide light in darkness. It is light when thus sepulchred. From the first God has been acting on the principle of sowing light for the righteous. He has sown light for the righteous in the dealings of Providence, in the passages of the Bible, in the whole pathway of life.

III. The psalmist does not limit the "sowing" to any particular season. As though the seed of life were always being deposited in the ground, he uses language which may denote that there is continually a fresh harvest in preparation for the righteous. The righteous shall always be in progress, one harvest of light furnishing, so to speak, seed for another. (1) The lesson to the righteous is to hold hopefully on, determining in the name of the Lord and staying on his God. (2) The lesson to the wicked is that, though God is sowing no light for them, they are sowing light for themselves. They must wake at last to the fearful discovery that they have been their own destroyers. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2164.

REFERENCES: xcvii. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 836. xcviii. 1.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., No. 496. xcviii. 1-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 221.

Psalm xcix., ver. 2.—"**The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all the people.**"

I. The Lord is great in supremacy.
II. The Lord is great in power.
III. The Lord is great in faithfulness.
IV. The Lord is great in mercy.

G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 81.

Psalm xcix., ver. 8.—"**Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.**"

The truths that lie in the text are these: pardon and retribution are ever united. They spring from one source of holy love, and they ought to become to us the occasions of solemn and thankful praise. "Exalt the Lord our God, for He is holy." "Thou forgavest them, and didst punish their inventions."

I. Notice, first, that forgiveness is at bottom the undisturbed communication of the love of God to sinful men. We are too apt to think that God pardons men in the fashion in which the sovereign pardons a culprit who has been sentenced to be hanged. Such pardon implies nothing as to the feelings of either the criminal or the monarch. There need neither be pity on the one side nor penitence on the other. The true idea of forgiveness is to be found not in the region of law only, but in the region of love and fatherhood. The forgiveness of God is over and over again set forth in Scripture as being a Father's forgiveness.

II. Such pardon does necessarily sweep away the one true penalty of sin. "The wages of sin is death." What is death? The wrenching away of a dependent soul from God. How is that penalty ended? When the soul is united to God in the threefold bond of trust, love, and obedience. The communication of the love is the barring of the hell.

III. The pardoning mercy of God leaves many penalties unremoved. Forgiveness and punishment both come from the same source, and generally go together. The old statement, "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is absolutely true, universally true. The Gospel is not its abrogation. God loves us too well to annihilate the *secondary* consequences of our transgressions.

IV. Pardoning love so modifies the punishment that it becomes an occasion for solemn thankfulness. Whatever painful consequences of past sin may still linger about our lives or haunt our hearts, we may be sure of two things about them all:

that they come *from* forgiving mercy; that they come *for* our profit.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 195.

REFERENCE: xcix. 8.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 150.

Psalm c.

VER. 1: The lands are required to receive the good tidings from heaven, which implies that they are to cast off and reject their own gods. They are to turn from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. A joyful noise is to be made, because a glad message has come.

Ver. 2: He who sends the message claims obedience. "Serve Jehovah." There is sorrow not in the service, but for not having served before; and there is sorrow remaining because the service is still so poor and defective. But there is no sorrow in the service.

Ver. 3: That Jehovah may be really served, He must be known. Jehovah is a God of wisdom, and He will have an intelligent worship. To know that Jehovah is God is to know His character and perfections as revealed in Holy Scripture, and most specially as revealed in Christ Jesus, His Son, in whom all lies in perfect harmony and most glorious display.

Vers. 4 and 5: The exercises which we are here called unto are praise, and blessing, and thanksgiving: praise because of God's excellences; blessing because of the happiness of God in Himself; thanksgiving because of His benefits.

J. DUNCAN, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 344.

REFERENCES: c. 2.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 9; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 769. c. 3-5.—*Ibid.*, vol. xx., No. 1197. c. 4—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 312. c. 5.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1265.

Psalm ci., ver. 1.—"I will sing of mercy and judgment."

THIS resolution indicates a hopeful and happy state of mind. A song is the natural channel for an outflow of gladness. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

Consider: I. To whom this man sings. "Unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing." He turns to God when he sings; he sings when he turns to God. Conscious nearness to God and exuberant joyfulness of spirit—these two have come together in the Psalmist. Apart from regeneration and reconciling, you may

have one of these two in human experience, but not both. To turn to the Lord, and in that attitude to sing for joy, belongs to the children—to those who have been made nigh by the blood of Christ and are accepted in the Beloved.

II. The Psalm that he sings. It is a psalm about mercy and judgment. These are the two sides of the Divine character as it is revealed by God and apprehended by men. They are the two attributes which lie over against each other, for conflict or in harmony, according to the conditions in which they are exercised or the point from which they are viewed. They intimate that God is merciful, and that God is just. On the one hand, both these attributes are ascribed to Him throughout the Scriptures; on the other hand, both are more or less clearly mirrored in the human conscience. The subject of the song is not one or the other, but both united. Their nature, as manifested to men, is essentially determined by their union. Neither mercy nor justice alone and apart could become the theme of praise in the lips of men. We could not sing them separately. Their union takes place in Christ crucified. In Him the promises of God are Yea and Amen. Had Christ not covenanted from the beginning and come in the fulness of time, the justice must have been poured out on the same persons for whom the mercy was needed. In that case, mercy, though it lived in God, could have had no exercise towards the sinful. Justice would have swept all the fallen away; and when Mercy issued forth, she would have soared over the waters like Noah's dove, and finding no rest for the sole of her foot, would have returned on weary wing to the ark again.

In Christ the process is reversed. It is first the ark and then the Flood. You have mercy to sing of first and judgment following. In the Substitute mercy and justice meet. Christ is the unspeakable gift; God is love. The design and effect of the sacrifice of Jesus is that God may be just, and the Justifier of him who believeth on Jesus.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 168.

Psalm ci., ver. 1.—"I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing."

I. OF mercy and judgment. And who among us has not the same mingled strain to utter? Who can say that his mercies have not been tempered with the gentle but solemn remindings of judgment at God's hand? Our very proverbs tell us of this: no day without its cloud; no rose without its thorn. And who

can say, on the other hand, that his judgments have not been most tenderly mixed with mercies? Our song may well then be of mercy and judgment: of His dealings towards us who, when He blesses, also chastises, lest we should forget Him; who, when He chastises, also blesses, lest we should distrust Him.

II. The world's song of mercy and judgment is a very different strain from the Christian's song of mercy and judgment. The world, in fact, sees not mercy on the one side nor judgment on the other. The fountain from which all blessings flow is unknown to the ungodly man. It is because such persons abound, and ever will abound, among us that we are exhorted on such occasions as these* to sing, not of fair and foul chance, but of mercy and judgment: mercy from One who shows mercy; judgment from One who exercises judgment.

III. Let us endeavour to make use of the present wonderful manifestation of God's mercies combined with His judgments to show our sense of His presence and our humility and thankfulness towards Him. We know of no mercies out of Christ. In Him we have every blessing. It is His satisfaction which has caused the Father to smile on this our world, His blood which has cleansed creation from its defilement.

IV. The joy of the Christian in God's mercies is never a barren joy, never only an inward feeling, a mere paroxysm of selfish exultation; but out of it ever springs from the fountain of his inner life the question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His mercies to me?"

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 107.

REFERENCE: ci. 1.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 258.

Psalm ci., ver. 2.—"When wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

DAVID'S subject in this Psalm is the ordering and hallowing of family life by bringing it under the influences and sanctions of religion.

I. That which strikes us first of all in this Psalm is that the qualifications for continuing in the household of David are to be moral qualifications. That which shall disqualify men from living with him is not want of ability or want of distinction, but want of loyalty to goodness and to God.

II. The qualifications for membership in David's house are chiefly negative. He is more careful to say who shall not than

* Preached on the day of thanksgiving for the harvest, 1854.

who shall enjoy the privilege. David hopes that with the coming of the sacred ark to Jerusalem—in other words, that with a nearer contact with the presence of God—he will be able to effect a great change. If people are not to be expelled, they must be improved; they must be converted. The restored sense of a sacred presence among them, the active works of the ministers and the sanctuary, the pervading atmosphere of worship and praise—these things would in time make the reformation which David had at heart easy and natural.

III. In Christendom the family is a different and a more beautiful thing than it was in David's time. Each father of a family can, by God's help, say, with David, that he will walk in his house with a perfect heart. To every head of a household has been committed a great power of influencing those about him for good. Influence them in some way he certainly will: if not for good, then for evil.

Two lessons would seem to be suggested by this Psalm of King David. (1) Observe the order and method of David's proceeding. He began by improving himself. (2) The improvement of the family can only be procured by religious, as distinct from merely moral, influences.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 241.

REFERENCES: ci. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1230. ci. 6.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 401. ci. 11.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 323. cii. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 199. cii. 15.—G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 132. cii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1141. **cii. 18.**—Bishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876, p. 105.

Psalm cii., ver. 24.—**"I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days."**

THE text is an earnest, impassioned prayer, a prayer against death; and the fact which gives it its earnestness and impassioned energy is that he who offers it is in "the midst of his days." Men in middle life are very apt to look upon death as an improbable event so far as they are concerned, and to make their calculations and shape their course accordingly.

I. The reasons for this fact. (1) The man in middle life has reasons taken from his circumstances and relations which render life to him very important. The ties which bind him to the world are now the strongest. He has taken his place in society, and is now sustaining his most important earthly responsibilities. (2) The spirit of enterprise is now most active. Man is forming

plans which will require years to develop; and those plans constitute the objects of his existence, the centre of his heart's warmest feelings. (3) It is a fact that fewer men die at the meridian than at any other point in human life. This fact forms the ground of men's calculations in reference to life.

II. The effects of this state of mind. (1) Of all men, those who are in the "midst of their days" are least prepared to die. (2) The legitimate effects of the Gospel are very rarely seen for the first time in persons who are passing through the meridian of life. This seems to be a period in human existence when the Spirit of God seldom achieves any signal victories. Such thoughts should arouse to feeling, awaken to anxiety, and prompt to inquiry all to whom they have reference.

E. MASON, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: cii. 24.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 377; J. Ker, *Old Testament Outlines*, p 135. cii. 26.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 44. cii. 27.—W. Baird, *The Hallowing of our Common Life*, p. 1. cii. 28.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 137. ciii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1078. ciii. 1-5.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 8.

Psalm ciii., ver. 2.—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

THIS Psalm is: (1) a monologue; (2) a psalm of recollection; (3) a psalm of thanksgiving. David begins by gathering together all the benefits by recollection, and now he has to arrange them, so that they can be sung by any soul exercising itself like his, and remembering the first benefit his soul has got.

I. The first benefit is forgiveness. David arranges all on a business plan; he puts his chief benefit first.

II. "He healeth all thy diseases." He says to his soul, as Aristotle said, "We are working under another category now." A moment ago there was a saint standing like Joshua, clad with filthy garments, an accuser accusing him, a gallows awaiting him, a broken law, a guilty sinner without any one to help him. But He "forgiveth all thine iniquities," though a man feel his sins so great, some one great sin so black, that his heart is sick, and he feels as though he needed another communion table to wash that sin away. But He heals malice, envy, carnal feelings, backbiting, unbelief, "all thy diseases."

III. He "crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." Beyond the seas, out there in the East, they have crowned their singers, their speakers, their wrestlers, with

laurel leaves; but I never read in Eastern story that they ever had laurels for the man whose tragedy was never acted, whose oration found no audience, whose song was never sung before the great Greek congregation. Christ came to seek and to comfort those who have uncrowned themselves, to seek out the poor, undistinguishable singer whose song has never been sung, the speaker who has found no suitable audience. He seeketh out the weary and lost, who have been broken by the weight of their load; and He crowneth poor sinners with His lovingkindness and tender mercy.

IV. The result of the crowning is that his mouth is satisfied with good things; his youth is renewed like the eagle's. When David was a child in the sheepfolds of Bethlehem, he had watched many of the ways of the children of nature. He had seen many an eagle come home bloody and bruised; he had seen her, guided by her instinct, retire to the cleft of the rock and gain strength there, shaking off her broken plumes. He knew her times and her seasons. She basked in the sunshine, resting until her strength was renewed. And when he sees himself a poor old broken-winged eagle, to him, the poor old sinner, the memory of the eagle comes back. He flies to the Rock of ages, flies like many a heart since that has been sick with pain and sin.

A. White, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 10.

I. It seems at first a strange thing that we should call upon our souls to bless the Lord. It is a fitting and natural thing that we should call upon the gracious God to bless us. But what can I give to Him? He is all fulness; He needs nothing, surely, that I can present to Him. How can I bless Him? Herein is a great mystery—the mystery of love. Love is a great want; God's love is a great want: love can only be satisfied with love. (1) David in this matter is very careful to stir up his soul; he knows how content we are to think about these things and let the heart sleep. (2) David wants the individuality of the praise. "My soul." No man can give the bit of praise that I can give.

II. Next he begins to number, to look at, the benefits. Here are three things that you and I should do with our benefits. (1) We should weigh them; they are so substantial. The word "benefit" in itself is a grand word. It means "good deed." God's word ever clothes itself in deed; He loveth in truth and in deed. (2) Number God's benefits. If we begin to number

them, we must find out that they are numberless. (3) Measure the Lord's benefits. Do not measure your mercies by your desires, for your desires are made for God. Keep your mercies in the right place and the Lord first; that is the only way of satisfaction. Do not measure your mercies by other people's; measure them by the footrule of your deserts. When we measure our mercies by our deserts, then we are lost in wonder, love, and praise.

M. G. PEARSE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 161.

Psalm ciii., ver. 2.—"Forget not all His benefits."

I. MAN stands in a continued relation to the past.

II. Man is called upon to reason from the past to the future.

III. This call to reason from the past to the future is an incidental illustration of the unchangeableness of God. What He was, He will be.

Application: (1) The atheism of anticipation should be corrected by the reverent gratitude of retrospection. (2) He who reviews the past thankfully may advance to the future hopefully. (3) Nothing forgotten so soon as "benefits."

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 503.

REFERENCES: ciii. 2.—G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 137; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 191. ciii. 2, 3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 14. ciii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1492; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 152.

Psalm ciii., vers. 3-5.—"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases," etc.

I. HE "forgiveth all thine iniquities." Thine iniquities are in-equities. There is nothing just or right in thee. He forgiveth thee thine evil nature, and He forgiveth all its evil fruit. And His forgiveness, like His power, fulfils itself in works.

II. He "healeth all thy diseases." Corruption and disease have a spiritual origin. The Divine art of healing therefore lies in the forgiveness of sin. Remove the in-equities of the soul, and universal healing comes in. Christ healeth all thy diseases by forgiving all thine iniquities.

III. He "redeemeth thy life from destruction." As righteousness, peace, and eternal life are an indissoluble unity, so are iniquity, misery, and destruction. Therefore He who forgiveth our iniquities redeems our life from destruction. The removal of all in-equity from our spiritual nature is not only the removal of all disease, but of the ground of disease; and the removal of

all disease and of the ground of disease is redemption from death.

IV. "He crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." The Lord our God is more than a Redeemer. He does not pardon His criminals and then dismiss them. He pardons them and receives them into His house; He makes them all children: and all His children are His heirs, and all His heirs are princes, and all His princes are crowned.

V. "He satisfieth thy mouth with good things." All the capacities of the immortal nature shall be filled, and the fulness shall be a fulness of good. "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him."

VI. And then the crown of crowns. His youth is renewed like the eagle's, not once renewed, to sink again into the frailty and dulness of age, but ever and evermore renewed, by the ceaseless communication of life from the source of life. Eternal life will be nothing less than joyous progression towards the perfection of youth.

J. PULSFORD, *Quiet Hours*, p. 231.

Psalm ciii., ver. 5.—"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

How may we recover in manhood, but in a wiser way, what was noble in our youth—recover our manifold interests, our poetic feeling towards the history of man and nature, our ideal of the goodness, truth, and love of man?

I. The restoration of manifold interests. Youth teaches us diversity, the first entrance into middle age concentration; in later life we ought to combine both, to recover the interests of the one and to retain the power of the other. I think one can do it best by the means of two great Christian ideas. One is that, as God has called us to perfection, we are bound to ennoble our being from end to end, leaving no faculty untrained. The other is that as Christ lived for man's cause, so should we. The first will force you to seek for manifold interests in order to make every branch of your nature grow; the second will lift you out of the monotonous and limited region of self into the infinite world of ideas. An infinite tenderness and grace belongs to every work whose highest aim is the aim of Christ—the good of man. Life then becomes delightful, even of passionate interest; and the whole of being unfolds like a rose—full of colour, scent, and beauty.

II. Restoration of poetic feeling. In the old dreamland we can never live again, but we may live in an ideal and yet a true world; we may restore the poetry of youth to our life in its relation both to man and nature. (1) As to the first, there is no idea which will so rapidly guide us into a larger and more imaginative view of the history of man as the great Christian thought, which we owe to Christ, that all the race is contained in God; that all are bound together into unity in Him; that as all are children of one Father, so all are brothers, existing in and for the good of one another. (2) Again, in our relation to nature, we can get back what we have lost. There are different paths to this recovery, but none lead to it more directly and rapidly than the true conception of God. Once we have realised the thought of one Divine will as the centre of the universe, we can no longer abide in the realm of unconnected facts. We hear no longer isolated notes, but the great symphony of nature—two or three themes infinitely varied, and the themes themselves so subtly connected in idea that all together they build up a palace of lovely and perfect harmony. This is the restoration in a truer form of the ideal majesty and the poetic feeling of our youth.*

S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 351.

References: ciii. 5.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 328. ciii. 6, 7.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 94. ciii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1171.

Psalm ciii., vers. 9, 13 (Prayer-book version).—"He will not alway be chiding: neither keepeth He His anger for ever. Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him."

I. In the mind of the psalmists there was nothing contradictory between faith in God as a righteous Judge and faith in God as being longsuffering and of great kindness. They did not think of God as divided between His sense of justice and His love of mercy, because they understood that mercy was never forgotten in His judgments. They felt that His judgments were the truest mercies both for themselves and for the world at large. So deep was their conviction of the blessedness of God's judgments that some of their most joyous strains are those in which they proclaim God as coming to judge the world in righteousness.

II. The text shows the fatherly character of God. He is our Father because He created and preserves us; He is our Father

* The "Restoration of our Ideal of Man" forms the subject of a separate sermon on Psalm viii. 4, 5.

because He rules us by the stern yet loving discipline of His righteous judgment; He is our Father because He is full of love, and forgiveness, and tender, fatherly pity, knowing our frame and remembering that we are dust.

III. Here then is a proof of the Divine source whence the inspirations of the psalmists came. They knew God as their Father because the Spirit of adoption was speaking to their hearts.

G. FORBES, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 149.

REFERENCES: ciii. 11.—*Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 1st series, p. 292. ciii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1108.

Psalm ciii., ver. 13 (with Heb. ii., ver. 17, and iv., ver. 15).—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

THE thought which I desire, by the comparison of these texts, to suggest is this: how the compassion of God for men disclosed in the Old Testament has grown in the New into the fellow-feeling of Christ. We have not lost our Father's pity; we have gained a Brother's sympathy.

I. Both halves of revelation agree in giving impartial prominence to two aspects of God's moral attitude towards us: to His aspect of displeasure towards the sinner as identified with his sin and His aspect of grace towards the sinner as separable from his sin. But looking only to the gracious or favourable side of the Divine character, I am struck by this, that in those Old Testament writings which make most of the kindlier and milder attributes of Jehovah the grand quality on which everything is made to rest is His pity. The inconceivable vastness of that interval which divides God from men was ever present to the devout Hebrew. It was across this gulf of contrast that Hebrew piety always represented Jehovah as regarding man. He beheld them creatures of yesterday, small, and frail, and evil, evanescent and sorrowful. He pitied them. Very beautiful to think of is this tender turning of the great Divine heart toward such as we are, and the waking up of pity at each new sight of our pitiable mood. Whatever the Old Testament discloses of Divine kindness to men, of gentle forbearance, and enduring, watchful care, and abundant forgiveness, and healing helpfulness, seems all of it to be the condescension of One who is too great to be anything else than nobly pitiful.

II. There is no doubt whatever that some souls, fed on such

views of God as these, did grow up to a spiritual stature quite heroical. True greatness of soul is near of kin to a manly lowliness of soul, and he who frankly and profoundly worships Him who is alone noble enough for worship will find himself ennobled.

III. At the same time, the characteristic tendency of Old Testament saints to look at the Divine goodness as coloured by His pity, and as having a constant reference to His distance above His creatures, implied an imperfect appreciation of His love. Love has not done its best when from above it pities us who are below. One better thing it had to do; and at last, when the world was ripe to bear it, love came and did it. Love when it is perfect vanquishes what it cannot obliterate: the distinctions of high and low, of great and small. It refuses to be separated from its loved one. Down from His height of serene, compassionate Divinity, therefore, love drew the Eternal Son of God, to become a Brother of the men whose Father He was. God has entered into a new relation to humanity. He has, what once He had not, a fellow-feeling, that fellow-feeling which springs from the touch of kinship. In brief, to the paternity of God has been added the fraternal tie.

IV. There are three directions in which actual experience must be held to modify even the compassions of the Most Merciful. (1) It gives such knowledge of every similar sufferer's case as no mere spectator can have. (2) By His incarnation Christ has put Himself on our own level. He has abolished at His own choice the gulf which parted us. He is our Equal; He is our Fellow. (3) A chord which has been once set in unison with another vibrates, they say, when its fellow is sharply struck. God has set His heart through human suffering into perpetual concord with human hearts. Strike them, and the heart of God quivers for fellowship. It is the remembrance of His own human past which stirs within the soul of Christ when, now from His high seat, He sees what mortal men endure. An echo from an unforgotten passion answers back to all the cries and sighs that go daily up from men and women who to this hour on earth must toil, and weep, and pray, and agonise, and die.

J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 138.

I. Jesus made Deity attractive. He presented Him in such a fashion that human love humanly expressed could give itself to Him. The incarnation of God translated theology out

of metaphysics into the physical, brought the apprehension of it within the scope of those senses that feed the soul. Pity, tenderness, courtesy of manner, sweetness of speech, patience, bravery, humility, faith, hope—these in Jesus were revealed as Divine, as God in the flesh, as Deity brought nigh.

II. There is nothing so fine in its influence or so sweet in its expression as the authority of love. We yielded loving obedience to it when we were children, as we heard its words from the mouth of mother and father. We never doubted their right to speak it. We never thought it was unnecessary. No more should we when God commands us. God is father and mother to us. His commands are wishes in our behalf, suggestions to us, entreaties, prayers, and whatever else is natural for love to feel and do for those it calls its own. This idea of the commands of God gives the mind a right standpoint from which to see the face and to hear the advice of that heavenly Fatherhood which is over us all in its solicitude, anxiety, and deathless love.

III. In the future we shall grow into this love as trees grow to their leaves and their blossoms. We are human now, but we are learning to be Divine. The creeds may not help us; but the loving and the forgiving, the bearing and the fighting, the weeping and the laughing, will. Our day will come after night, and our calm after storm. We are men and women now; we shall be angels by-and-bye: and what are angels but men fully grown and women to whom all possible whiteness and sweetness has come? Our Father will give us new names when we are grown enough to look like Him.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 397.

I. UPON the three grounds of creation, property, and unity we base the parental tenderness of God. And if once that fact be established, there are two things which become impossible for ever. (1) The one impossibility is that God should ever feel contempt for us. Pity is a respectful feeling; real pity never despises: it always acts delicately. (2) The other impossibility is that God should ever feel any unkindness towards us.

II. Notice one or two of the characteristic features which mark a father. (1) Anticipation. We have an amazing history yet to learn of what has been the anticipatory character of God's love to us. (2) Patience. Of all the marvels of God, the greatest marvel is His longsuffering. If you ask the secret

of this wonderful endurance of God, how it is that He has borne all the insults and all the irritation which we all have been continually giving Him, the answer lies in the deep principle of parental character. (3) God's pity is not a weak pity; it is not a morbid pity; it is not a pity that cannot punish. He does punish His own children; in this world He punishes them more severely than other men.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 186.

REFERENCES: ciii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1650; J. Baillie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 230.

Psalm ciii., vers. 13, 14.—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

I. THERE is no evidence to be derived of the existence of pity in any overruling Deity as far as the laws of nature reveal the Divine character. As we rise from the lower to the higher organised animals, there does begin to be a very distinct manifestation of affection. Among men the feeling of pity is first disclosed in a very clear way. We are prepared to believe that the analogy of this line of development continues, and that in angels it is as much superior to what it is in the highest men as in the highest men it is superior to what it is in the lowest; and we are prepared to believe that above angels and all supernal beings, in God Himself, it takes on a grandeur and dignity utterly inconceivable to men and commensurate with the infiniteness of God's own nature.

II. If we look at human society as an organisation, we shall find that it does not fitly serve as an analogue of the Divine nature. As a ruler, man cannot have pity. Government was not meant for purposes of restoration. It was meant to be a restraining, guiding, penal institution.

III. Above all other places, it is in the family and in the individual heart that we find the full disclosure of pity, or a state of sympathy and helpfulness in view of another's suffering. If one would gain the clearest ideas of the scope and nature of pity, he must study it in the family. There we see: (1) that love inflicts pain. (2) Where suffering is inflicted by a wise and loving parent, the object of it is not to avenge a wrong done to the parent. (3) Pity is consistent with penalty.

In view of these statements, I remark: (*a*) Pity on the part of God will not prevent the infliction of penalty among transgressors. (*b*) Those who are suffering the just consequences

of their sins are not on that account excluded from God's pity. (*c*) All who are striving to live aright in this world, although they are far from successful, may be comforted in the thought that there are more who sympathise with them than they know or dream.

H. W. BEECHER, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 326.

REFERENCES: ciii. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 941. ciii. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 185.

Psalm ciii., vers. 15, 16 (Prayer-book version).—"The days of man are but as grass: for he flourisheth as a flower of the field. For as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more."

MAN'S reason is his distinctive privilege; but it has one melancholy result: it makes him know his own weakness and mortality. Other creatures are only aware of evil when they actually come upon it, and after the moment of terror are tranquil and careless, as before. Man has evil allotted to him, with all the aggravation of its prospect and approach—the long-sustained and harassing pains of doubt and apprehension, fears going and returning. His melancholy foresight creates a perpetual war; and he lives within a circle of enemies, and sustains his life as in a besieged city. He may be conscious of strength, but his enemies are strong too; and they are many, and he is one.

I. This is more especially the effect of the gift of reason on the subject of death. On other points it only reveals to us our insecurity; here it reveals to us the end of our existence itself as far as this world is concerned. No sooner is man born than he foresees his death; he is made a prophet in spite of himself. The soul which God has given him is a prophetic one. Such being the effect of the gift of reason on this subject, and such our particular privilege and trial, how do men meet it?

II. Worldly men take one view of this, and say that such a looking forward and such a prophetical tone of mind with respect to death is not natural, because it leads to such results. And as a counterbalance to, and remedy for, such presages they take refuge in the matter-of-fact sensation of life which belongs to us. They throw themselves deliberately and systematically upon this worldly instinct, in order to counterbalance the true prophetic nature of the soul and prevent it from acting, in order to deaden the sense of futurity and annihilate the other world to their minds.

III. Now what is the Scripture way of dealing with the subject of death? It does not allow it to be thus put aside. It makes us view it with steady, calm eye and keep it before us. It tells the soul to reckon beforehand, to see, to prepare; it lengthens its sight: it fixes its aim. Foresight was given us that we might be, not paralysed, indeed, and rendered motionless, but sobered and chastened in the exercise of our active faculties, that we should feel that very check of which worldly men are impatient, for they would fain while they do live be going to live for ever in their imagination.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 258.

REFERENCE: ciii. 15-19.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 536.

Psalm ciii., vers. 20-22 (Prayer-book version).—"O praise the Lord, ye angels of His, ye that excel in strength: ye that fulfil His commandment, and hearken unto the voice of His words," etc.

THESE verses contain or imply an answer—the unvarying answer of Holy Scripture—to the question which is ever recurring, which perplexed wise and anxious heathen men, and still puts itself at one time or another to each of us—the question, I mean, What is the object of man? for what end do we, the human race or the individuals who make it up, find ourselves here on earth? Various are the answers which men have given and give. To please himself, to find happiness, to search farther and farther into knowledge, to perfect the race—each of these has been said to be the end of man. The Bible carries us high above these selfish answers. It lifts our eyes upwards from earth to the glorious order of the heavens, and to Him that sitteth thereon; and, with the Psalmist in the text, we learn to look upon man as part of a mighty universe, his voice but one note in a wondrous harmony of praise, his course but one among many orbits of obedient service, his race but one among countless orders of beings, reaching upwards to the highest angels, reaching downwards to the lowest creature that hath breath, to whom there is but one task, end, and function: the service of God their Maker. Consider in detail the bearing upon our daily life of this great thought, that our life and all its parts must not merely be consistent with, but *be*, a sacrifice of service offered to Almighty God in Jesus Christ.

I. Although service and worship may in heaven blend in one, yet as heat, which science shows to be only a form of motion, is for practical purposes a thing distinct from it, so the devout adoration of Almighty God must be distinct from those duties

of daily business in which He bids us actively serve Him. And doubtless it is of the two the more heavenly. The things of earth which we treat in daily life do, although we handle them in His name and for His sake, yet soil our hands and engross our faculties. In devotion we turn from them to be alone with God, or rather, in company with a worshipping universe, to look towards God alone.

II. You come out from these more sacred parts of your time to do your daily work and live your worldly life. This too must be made the service of God. To remember that this must be done will enable you to do it. The thought will overshadow your lives with a sense of responsibility. Our Lord's parable of the talents entrusted to the servants may deepen this sense. Whatever powers creatures have—much more such a creature as man, created once by God, re-created in Jesus Christ—are talents to be employed, laid out at interest, for their God.

E. S. TALBOT, *Keble College Sermons*, p. 1.

Psalm ciii., ver. 22.—"Bless the Lord, all His works—in all places of His dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul."

I. THE text consists of two sentences: the first, the Psalmist's exhortation to others; the second, a precisely similar exhortation to himself: "Bless ye the Lord." His hand is upon his harp; he is weaving a spirit-stirring anthem, and he summons every creature within sound of his voice to join in the song of rapture and thankful adoration. But why does he not proceed with the lofty chant? Why die the notes away as though there were a sudden check in the poetic fervour? Was it not that David felt how paralysing it was to summon others to praise God, how easily such a summons might be taken in proof that the heart of the speaker was beating with thankfulness though all the while it might be cold and indifferent, with little sense of the Divine goodness and little endeavour to magnify the Lord? Therefore, probably, it was that the Psalmist paused to examine and exhort himself. The necessity for self-examination increases at precisely the same rate with activity in disseminating spiritual good, for at precisely the same rate does the probability increase that we shall take for granted our share in that good, and yet all the while be suffering it to slip from our grasp.

II. Consider how this danger may be guarded against. How shall the guide who feels his mind deadening to the influence of the natural landscape, through the frequency of inspection and the routine of describing it to strangers—how shall he prevail

keeping his mind alive to the beauties of the scene, the wonders and splendours which crowd the panorama? Let him not be satisfied with showing that panorama to others; let him not look at it merely in his professional capacity; but let him take frequent opportunities of going by himself to the various points of view, that he may study it under all possible aspects. No other advice need be given to the spiritual guide, whose office is that of teaching others the Gospel, and whose danger therefore is that of growing cold to the Gospel itself. The more we engage in teaching others, the more tenacious should we be of seasons of private meditation and self-examination.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2156.

REFERENCE: ciii. 22.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 305.

Psalm civ., ver. 1.—"O Lord my God, Thou art very great."

GREATNESS, if you look at it as something separate from you, and away, still more if you have a consciousness that it may be against you, is a matter of awe and terror. If you mingle it with yourself, as a part of yourself, and yourself a part of it, greatness, becoming a possession, is a grand thought and a pleasant one. So we unite the two clauses of the text. David could not have said the second with gladness unless he could have said the first with confidence: "O Lord *my* God, Thou art very great."

I. If it is great to be at one and the same time infinitely comprehensive and exquisitely minute, to fill the widest and yet to be occupied by the narrowest, then what a God is ours! The unspeakably large and the invisibly small are alike to Him; and we stand, and we marvel not at the one or at the other, but at the combination of the telescopic glance and the microscopic care; and we confess, "O Lord my God, Thou art very great."

II. It is a great thing to stoop. He inhabiteth equally, at this very moment, eternity and that little heart of yours. The whole Gospel is only a tale of immense stooping—how the purest demeaned Himself to the vilest, and how, "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

III. Some one has said that continuity is the secret of the sublime; the eye goes on and on, and finds no break, and calls it sublimity. Then what a sublimity there is in Him who

century after century, year by year, without the shadow of a turning, has continued the same, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever"!

IV. Look at the wonderful greatness of His plan of redemption. The length, and the breadth, and the depth, and the height are all passing knowledge; and we have nothing to do but to humble ourselves in the dust and say, "O Lord my God, Thou art very great."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 257.

Psalm civ., vers. 1, 2 (Prayer-book version).—"Thou art become exceeding glorious; Thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Thou deckest Thyself with light as it were with a garment: and spreadest out the heavens like a curtain."

NATURE has two great revelations: that of use and that of beauty; and the first thing we observe about these two characteristics of hers is that they are bound together and tied to each other. The beauty of nature is not, as it were, a fortunate accident, which can be separated from her use; there is no difference in the tenure upon which these two characteristics stand: the beauty is just as much a part of nature as the use; they are only different aspects of the selfsame facts. (2) But if the first thing we observe respecting use and beauty is that they are united in their source, the next thing we observe is that in themselves they are totally separate. We have not the slightest conception of the common root in which these enormous diversities unite, the unity to which they mount up, the ultimate heading out of which both branch, the secret of their identity. It is worth observing, in the history of the mind of this country, the formation of a kind of passion for scenery and natural beauty. This fact cannot well be without some consequences bearing on religion.

I. First, with respect to the place which the beauty of nature has in the argument of design from nature. When the materialist has exhausted himself in efforts to explain utility in nature, it would appear to be the peculiar office of beauty to rise up suddenly as a confounding and baffling extra, which was not even formally provided for in his scheme There is this remarkable difference between useful contrivance and beauty as evidence of an intelligent cause, that contrivance has a complete end and account of itself, without any reference to the understanding of man; but it is essential to the very sense and meaning of beauty that it should be seen: and inasmuch as

it is visible to reason alone, we have thus in the very structure of nature a recognition of reason and a distinct address to reason, wholly unaccountable unless there is a higher reason or mind to which to make it.

II. The beauty of nature is necessary for the perfection of praise; the praise of the Creator must be essentially weakened without it: it must be roused and excited by sight. (1) Beauty stands upon the threshold of the mystical world, and excites a curiosity about God. This curiosity is a strong part of worship and of praise. So long as a man is probing nature, and in the thick of its causes and operations, he is too busy about his own inquiries to receive this impress from her; but place the picture before him, and he becomes conscious of a veil and curtain which has the secrets of a moral existence behind it: interest is inspired, curiosity is awakened, and worship is raised. (2) Nature is partly a curtain and partly a disclosure, partly a veil and partly a revelation; and here we come to her faculty of symbolism, which is so strong an aid to, and has so immensely affected, the principles of worship. The Great Spirit, speaking by dumb representation to other spirits, intimates and signifies to them something about Himself, for if nature is symbolical, what it is symbolical about must be its Author. The Deity over and above our inward conscience wants His external world to tell us He is moral; He therefore creates in nature a universal language about Himself: its features convey signals from a distant country, and man is placed in communication with a great correspondent whose tablet He interprets. And thus is formed that which is akin to worship in the poetical view of nature. While we do not worship the material created sign—nor that would be idolatry—we still repose on it as the true language of the Deity.

III. In this peculiar view of nature, the mind fastening upon it as a spectacle or a picture, it is to be observed that there are two points in striking concurrence with the vision language of Scripture. (1) Scripture has specially consecrated the faculty of sight, and has partly put forth, and has promised in a still more complete form, a manifestation of the Deity to mankind, through the medium of a great sight. (2) It must be remarked, as another principle in the Scriptural representation, that the act of seeing a perfectly glorious sight or object is what constitutes the spectator's and beholder's own glory.

IV. But though the outward face of nature is a religious communication to those who come to it with the religious ele-

ment already in them, no man can get a religion out of the beauty of nature. There must be for the base of a religion the internal view, the inner sense, the look into ourselves, and recognition of an inward state: sin, helplessness, misery. If there is not this, outward nature cannot of itself enlighten man's conscience and give him a knowledge of God. It will be a picture to him, and nothing more.

J. B. MOZLEY, *University Sermons*, p. 122.

Psalm civ., ver. 2.—"Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment."

I. THERE are two kinds of mystery: a mystery of darkness and a mystery of light. With the mystery of darkness we are familiar. Of the mystery of light we have not thought, perhaps, so much. With all deep things the deeper light brings new mysteriousness. The mystery of light is the privilege and prerogative of the profoundest things. The shallow things are capable only of the mystery of darkness. Of that all things are capable. Nothing is so thin, so light, so small, that if you cover it with clouds or hide it in half-lights, it will not seem mysterious. But the most genuine and profound things you may bring forth into the fullest light and let the sunshine bathe them through and through, and in them there will open ever-new wonders of mysteriousness. Surely of God it must be supremely true that the more we know of Him, the more He shows Himself to us, the more mysterious He must for ever be. The mystery of light must be complete in Him. Revelation is not the unveiling of God, but a changing of the veil that covers Him, not the dissipation of mystery, but the transformation of the mystery of darkness into the mystery of light. To the pagan God is mysterious because He is hidden in clouds, mysterious like the storm. To the Christian God is mysterious because He is radiant with infinite truth, mysterious like the sun.

II. The doctrine of the Trinity is not an easy, ready-made, satisfactory explanation of God, in which the inmost chambers of His life are unlocked and thrown wide open, that whoso will may walk there and understand Him through and through. There is a mystery concerning God to him who sees the richness of the Divine life in the threefold unity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost which no man feels to whom God does not seem to stand forth from the pages of his Testament in that completeness. Not as the answer to a riddle which leaves all things clear, but as the deeper sight of God, prolific with a

thousand novel questions which were never known before, clothed in a wonder which only in that larger light displayed itself, offering new worlds for faith and reverence to wander in, so must the New Testament revelation, the truth of Father, Son, and Spirit, one perfect God, offer itself to man.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 305.

REFERENCE: civ. 3.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 8

Psalm civ., ver. 4.—"Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire."

CONSIDER what is implied in the text.

I. What a number of beautiful and wonderful objects does nature present on every side of us, and how little we know concerning them! Why do rivers flow? Why does rain fall? Why does the sun warm us? And the wind—why does it blow? Here our natural reason is at fault; we know that it is the spirit in man and in beast that makes man and beast move, but reason tells us of no spirit abiding in what is called the natural world, to make it perform its ordinary duties. Now here Scripture interposes, and seems to tell us that all this wonderful harmony is the work of angels. Those events which we ascribe to chance, as the weather, or to nature, as the seasons, are duties done to that God who maketh His angels to be winds, and His ministers a flame of fire. Nature is not inanimate; its daily toil is intelligent; its works are *duties*. Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven.

II. While this doctrine raises the mind and gives it a matter of thought, it is also profitable as a humbling doctrine. Theories of science are useful, as classifying, and so assisting us to recollect, the works and ways of God and of His ministering angels. And again, they are ever most useful in enabling us to apply the course of His providence and the ordinances of His will to the benefit of man. Thus we are enabled to enjoy God's gifts; and let us thank Him for the knowledge which enables us to do so, and honour those who are His instruments in communicating it. But if such a one proceeds to imagine that, because he knows something of this world's wonderful order, he therefore knows *how* things really go on; if he treats the miracles of nature as mere mechanical processes, continuing their course by themselves; if in consequence he is what may

be called irreverent in his conduct towards nature, thinking (if I may so speak) that it does not hear him, and see how he is bearing himself towards it; and if, moreover, he conceives that the order of nature, which he partially discerns, will stand in the place of the God who made it, and that all things continue and move on not by His will and power and the agency of the thousands and ten thousands of His unseen servants, but by fixed laws, self-caused and self-sustained, what a poor weak worm and miserable sinner he becomes! When we converse on subjects of nature scientifically, repeating the names of plants and earths and describing their properties, we should do so religiously, as in the hearing of the great servants of God, with the sort of diffidence which we always feel when speaking before the learned and wise of our own mortal race, as poor beginners in intellectual knowledge as well as in moral attainments.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 358.

Psalm civ., ver. 4 (Prayer-book version).—"He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire," or rather "He maketh the winds His angels, and flaming fires His ministers."

IN the present day a large number of scientific men maintain that the appearance of design in nature is an appearance only, not a reality. This view is supposed to be established in two ways: first, by the general doctrine of the universal reign of law; and secondly, by the particular theory of evolution.

I. Look, first, at the argument drawn from the universality of law. Law is a very misleading word. Law only means invariable sequence. You will sometimes hear it said, the universe is governed by laws. The universe is *not* governed by laws. It is governed *according* to laws, but no one can suppose that the laws make themselves; no one can imagine, for example, that water determines of its own accord always to freeze at one temperature and to boil at another, that snowflakes make up their minds to assume certain definite and regular shapes, or that fire burns of malice aforethought. The sequences of nature do not explain themselves. The regularity of nature, then, needs to be explained. It cannot explain itself, nor can it disprove the existence of a controlling will. The only reign of law incompatible with volition would be the reign of the law of chaos.

II. Look at the bearing of the theory of evolution upon theology. We will suppose, for argument's sake, that even in

its most comprehensive shape the doctrine has been proved true; what is the effect upon our theology? Why, simply that a certain mode of statement of a certain argument of Paley's is seen to be unsound. And this unsoundness has been already recognised on other grounds. Paley maintained that every definite organ and portion of an organ throughout the world is specially, by a particular creative fiat, adapted to a certain end, just as every portion of a watch implies a special contrivance on the part of the watchmaker. But this, as every one now knows, is completely disproved by the existence in most animals of rudimentary and abortive organs, which are evidently not adapted to any end, as, for example, the rudiments of fingers in a horse's hoof, the teeth in a whale's mouth, or the eyes in an unborn mole. But though we no longer profess to trace Divine design in every minute fraction of an organism, this does not hinder us from seeing it in organisms regarded in their entirety and in nature considered as a whole.

The doctrine of the survival of the fittest does not account for the fact that there are fittest to survive. Evolution does not disprove a Designer; it only proves that He works in a different way from what had been supposed. There is no reason why things may not be made *for* their circumstances, though they are partly made *by* them. The fact that natural forces work together regularly and methodically does not prove that they have no master; it suggests rather His absolute control. The eternal evolution of the more desirable from the less cannot be logically accounted for except on the ground that it is effected by infinite power, and wisdom, and skill.

A. W. MOMERIE, *The Origin of Evil, and Other Sermons*, p. 271.

REFERENCES: civ. 4.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 461.

Psalm civ., ver. 10.—"He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills."

I. THE incessant murmur of the mountain spring in the solitude speaks to the ear of the thoughtful of the wonderful rhythm of the universe. That spring seems the wayward child of uncertain parents; and yet it wells up with every beat of the pulse of nature, as it has welled up for thousands of years. As the blood circulates in the body continually, so does the water circulate on the earth. Not more certainly would life terminate in the body if the pulse ceased to beat than would the world be locked in everlasting sleep if the mountain spring ceased to

throb. Calm and grand as when the morning stars sang together in the morning of creation, nature moves in her appointed orbit; and her blades of grass, and grains of sand, and drops of water tell us that we must be brought into concord with the beneficent law which they all obey so steadfastly and harmoniously or else perish. What nature does unconsciously and will-lessly let us do consciously and willingly; and learning a lesson even from the humble voice of the mountain spring, let us make the statutes of the Lord our song in the house of our pilgrimage.

II. Very mysterious seems the origin of a spring as it sparkles up from the bosom of the mountain, from the heart of the rock, into the sunshine. It stimulates our imagination. It seems like a new creation in the place. Through what dark fissures, through what fine veins and pores of the earth, have its waters trickled up to the central reservoir whose overflowing comes up to view, crystal-clear and crowned with light! The Hebrew name of a prophet was derived from the bubbling forth of the waters of a spring, implying that his utterances were the irresistible overflowings of the Divine fountain of inspiration in his soul. Beside the well of Sychar, incarnate in human form, in visible manifestation to the eyes of men, was the great Reality to whom all myths and symbols pointed, who thirsted Himself that He might give us to drink. And if our eyes be purged with spiritual eyesalve, we too shall see beside every spring the true Oracle, the great Prophet, the Divinity of the waters, who "sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills." As the natural spring stands between the living and the dead, between the sterility of desert plains and the bright verdure which it creates along its course, so He stands between our souls and spiritual death, between the desolation of sin and the peaceable fruits of righteousness which He enables us to produce.

H. MACMILLAN, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 117.

Psalm civ., vers. 13-15.—"He watereth the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works," etc.

THE Bible tells us not to be religious, but to be godly. Because we think that people ought to be religious, we talk a great deal about religion; because we hardly think at all that a man ought to be godly, we talk very little about God: and that good old Bible word "godliness" does not pass our lips once a month. A man may be very religious and yet very ungodly.

I. What is the difference between religion and godliness? Just the difference that there is between always thinking of self and always forgetting self, between the terror of a slave and the affection of a child, between the fear of hell and the love of God. Men are religious for fear of hell; but they are not godly, for they do not love God or see God's hand in everything. They forget that they have a Father in heaven; that He sends rain, and sunshine, and fruitful seasons; that He gives them all things richly to enjoy, in spite of all their sins. They talk of the visitation of God as if it was something that was very extraordinary, and happened very seldom, and when it came, only brought evil, harm, and sorrow. Every blade of grass grows by the "visitation of God." Every healthy breath you draw, every cheerful hour you ever spent, every good crop you ever housed safely, came to you by the visitation of God.

II. The text teaches us to look at God as He who gives to all freely and upbraideth not. If we would but believe that God knows our necessities before we ask, that He gives us daily more than we ever get by working for it, if we would but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other things would be added to us; and we should find that he who loses his life should save it.

C. KINGSLEY, *Village Sermons*, p. 10.

REFERENCES: civ. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 757. civ. 15.—F. Delitzsch, *Expositor*, 3rd series, p. 64. civ. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 529; C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 179; H. Macmillan, *Bible Teachings in Nature*, p. 65; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, pp. 226, 298.

Psalm civ., ver. 17.—"As for the stork, the fir trees are her house."

I. NATURE, in all her departments, is a system of mutual accommodation. Every object affords hospitality to every other object. Nature places before us, in the kind shelter which the larger and more richly endowed objects afford to the smaller and poorer, a silent picture of what should be our own conduct in the intercourse of human life; and in the added beauty and charm which the exercise of this grace of hospitality imparts to the objects that bestow it, she teaches us that by receiving strangers we too may be entertaining angels unawares. As nature is ever defeating the plans of selfishness by making all her objects mutually dependent, none being allowed to live entirely for itself, so God, by the arrangements of His providence, is breaking down all human monopolies and

enforcing a wide hospitality, allowing no man to live for himself alone.

II. In the plan of religion His intention is still more manifest. The growth of His kingdom on earth is like that of a mustard tree, which, springing from the smallest seed, develops into the grandest form, covering the earth with its shadow and lodging the birds of the air among its boughs, protecting the poorest and feeblest things which men may despise.

III. From every lonely, hungry soul Jesus seeks hospitality, standing at the door without, patiently waiting for the opening of it; and when He is welcomed in, there is a mutual feeling of love, and the Guest becomes a generous Host. And what His thoughts of hospitality to the race whom He has come to seek and redeem are is strikingly seen in that beautiful parable where the feast is spread, and the servants are sent first to individuals favoured by fortune and then to the poor and the outcast, to bid them all come, for all things are ready.

H. MACMILLAN, *The Olive Leaf*, p. 39.

REFERENCE: civ. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1005.

Psalm civ., vers. 20, 21.—"Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God."

I. CONSIDER, with respect and admiration, the manful, cheerful view of pain and death, and indeed of the whole creation, which the psalmist has, because he has faith. There is in him no sentimentalism, no complaining of God, no impious, or at least weak and peevish, cry of "Why hast Thou made all things thus?" He sees the mystery of pain and death. He does not attempt to explain it, but he faces it—faces it cheerfully and manfully, in the strength of his faith, saying, This, too, mysterious, painful, terrible, as it may seem, is as it should be, for it is of the law and will of God, from whom come all good things, of the God in whom is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Therefore to the psalmist the earth is a noble sight, filled to his eyes with the fruit of God's works. What impresses his mind is just what would impress the mind of a modern poet, a modern man of science; namely, the wonderful variety, richness, and strangeness of its living things. He perceives, with the instinct of a true poet and a true philosopher, "These all wait upon Thee, O God, that Thou mayest give them meat in due season."

II. Then he goes further still. He has looked into the face of life innumerable. Now he looks into the face of innumerable

death, and sees there too the spirit and the work of God. "Thou hidest Thy face; they are troubled. Thou takest away their breath; they die, and are turned again to their dust." The psalmist's God was not merely a strong God or a wise God, but a good God, and a gracious God, and a just God, likewise a God who not only made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is, but who keepeth His promise for ever, who helpeth them to right who suffer wrong, and feedeth the hungry. It is this magnificent conception of God's living and actual goodness and justice which the psalmist had which made him trust God about all the strange and painful things which he saw in the world. C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 205.

Psalm civ., vers. 20-23.

I. "THOU makest darkness." Darkness is a part of Divine order; at least, in the physical universe it is so: and I suppose in this respect, as in all other respects, the material universe represents the spiritual. Universal darkness is a house for light. Darkness is that upon which or through which the light shines. It is an essential part of God's work.

II. "It is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." (1) Darkness, as well as light, serves its own purposes. Light is good for flowers, but it is not so good for their roots. There would be no flowers long if the roots did not abide in darkness. (2) The beasts of the forest "creep" forth. For about the creatures whose element is darkness there is always something subtle and stealthy, as though they had no absolute authority for their existence. By slinking away before the light, they seem to confess, "We belong only to the strife and twilight of the universe. When the great day comes, we shall be no more."

III. "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." The young lions know not God; but God knows them, and understands the roar of their desire. God expects no meeker prayers from His wild beasts.

IV. "The sun ariseth," etc. There are children of the day, and there are children of darkness. While the beasts had their sport man slept. Now the beasts sleep, and man rises and "goeth forth unto his work."

V. Nature is a great darkness, in which the kingdom of God appears not. The true Light is not to be seen in nature's skies. Nature is a huge organisation of night.

VI. The violent eagerness of our sensual instincts and

passions may well be called "lions." There is ever something ravenous about the desires of the natural man.

VII. So long as the appetites and passions are permitted to rule, it is night with the human spirit. "The sun ariseth." Christ is man's Sun.

VIII. "Man goeth forth," etc. He is wakened out of sleep; he is risen from the dead. Christ has given him life. Man's work is to work his way back out of fallen life, to work in unity with Christ his Saviour "until evening," that he may then go home to the dear interior life and eternity.

J. PULSFORD, *Quiet Hours*, p. 12.

Psalm civ., ver. 23.—"Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening."

IT has been pretended by some teachers that works were only required under the Law, and grace comes instead under the Gospel; but the true account of the matter is this, that the Law enjoined works, and the grace of the Gospel fulfils them. The Law commanded, but gave no power; the Gospel bestows the power. Thus the Gospel is the counterpart of the Law. The Gospel does not abrogate works, but provides for them. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour" from the morning of the world to its evening.

I. But here an objection may be drawn from the parable of the labourers, which requires notice. It may be said that the labourers, who represent the Jews, complain that those who were called in the evening—that is, Christians—had worked but a short time, and in the cool of the day. Hence it may be argued that Christians have no irksome or continued toil, but are saved, without their trouble, by grace. What is meant by the "burden and heat of the day"? It means that religion pressed heavily on the Jews as a burden, because they were unequal to it; and it was as the midday heat, overpowering them with its intensity, because they had no protection against it. But for us, Christ hath redeemed us from the burden and heat, and the curse of the Law, by being made a curse for us.

II. Nor, secondly, can we argue that our work is shorter from the labourer's complaint, "These have wrought but one hour." For we are called in the world's evening, not in our own. By the eleventh hour is not meant that Christians have little to do, but that the time is short. Earth and sky are ever failing, Christ is ever coming, Christians are ever lifting up their heads and looking out; and therefore it is the evening.

III. "Until the evening." Not in the daytime only, lest we begin to run well, but fall away before our course is ended. The *end* is the proof of the matter. When the sun shines, this earth pleases; but let us look towards that eventide and the cool of the day when the Lord of the vineyard will walk amid the trees of the garden, and say unto His steward, "Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first." That evening will be the trial, when the heat, and fever, and noise of the noontide are over, and the light fades, and the prospect saddens, and the shades lengthen, and the busy world is still. May that day and that hour ever be in our thoughts. J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 1.

I. MAN goeth forth. Without any doubt, we wake up in a world of work. Work is a Divine sacrament. It is a sacrament of life, or it should be. (1) We are cultivated by work. Very plainly has God put us into such a universe that He can only shape us by work. All that reduces us to experience, all that stirs within us the sense of knowledge, partakes of the nature of work. (2) Work never ends with the act; it has a great beyond. (3) In the kingdom of grace there is still the kingdom of labour. Go forth; watch for Christ; work, labour, for Him: and when He comes, you may win His smile.

II. I turn from the thought of the work as a fact to the spirit in which it should be engaged in. (1) A nobleness of soul looks out from the words, Go forth. Man goeth forth; it means that he calls to patience, courage, perseverance, and good-temper to wait upon him. Toil, pain, doubt, terror, difficulty—these retreat before the recognition of a great life purpose. (2) Life may be purposeful; and there are comfortable views, most comfortable perspectives. Thou art a thought of God; thou art a man; thou art a soul with Divine intuitions and intentions—Divine forces working in thee: from them we gather the spirit which overlooks failure, for "what is failure here but a triumph's evidence for the fulness of the days?" Hasten on, then, to the evening; to the sharpest pain there comes a close, to the roughest voyage an end. E. PAXTON HOOD, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 69.

REFERENCES: civ. 23.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 19.

Psalm civ., ver. 24.—"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches."

I. SURELY the man who wrote this Psalm must have thought very differently about this world, with its fields and woods, its

beasts and birds, from what we think. David looked on the earth as God's earth. We look on it as man's earth, or nobody's earth. To David the earth spoke of God, who made it; by seeing what this earth is like, he saw what God, who made it, is like. We see no such thing. David knew that this earth was his lesson-book; this earth was his work-field: and yet those same thoughts which showed him how he was made for the land round him, and the land round him was made for him, showed him also that he belonged to another world—a spirit-world; showed him that though his home and business were here on earth, yet that, for that very reason, his home and business were in heaven, with God, who made the earth.

II. "All things are God's garment," says the wise man—outward and visible signs of His unseen and unapproachable glory; and when they are worn out, He changes them, as a garment: and they shall be changed. But He is the same. He is there all the time. All things are His work. In all things we may see Him, if our souls have eyes. The man who is no scholar in letters may read of God as he follows the plough, for the earth he ploughs is his Father's; there is God's mark and seal on it, His name, which, though it be written in the dust, yet neither man nor fiend can wipe out. It would keep us from many a sin, and stir us up to many a holy thought and deed, if we could learn to find in everything around us, however small or mean, the work of God's hand, the likeness of God's countenance, the shadow of God's glory.

C. KINGSLEY, *Village Sermons*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: civ. 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 47; A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 64. civ. 24, 28-30.—C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 18, and *Westminster Sermons*, p. 193. civ. 25.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 325. civ. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1259. civ. 28.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 282.

Psalm civ., ver. 30.—**"Thou renewest the face of the earth."**

I. THE first voice we hear speaks directly for God—for the Divine existence and presence with us in His works. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Nature says in *her* heart, and in every colour and feature of her flushing face, "There is a God, and He is here!"

II. The spring sings a clear song of the Divine faithfulness. Every spring is with God the keeping of covenant. He is, as it were, conducting an argument as to His own fidelity. The

argument began when Noah came out of the ark, and it will end only at the judgment day.

III. Spring tells us of God's great goodness. It is not merely that He made a certain promise four thousand years ago, and must keep it. It is that He made the promise and loves to keep it. The chief joy of God's existence is goodness. The Divine occupation for ever is to give.

IV. The season tells us softly and melodiously of Divine tenderness. God takes this season of the year to tell us especially what tenderness, what delicacy, what colourings of exquisite beauty, there are in His nature. In Him are all the archetypes of beauty and all the fountains of tenderness; we may therefore commit ourselves and all we have to His keeping.

V. Spring has a voice of good cheer to all who are serving God faithfully and seeking good ends for themselves or for others, although as yet with little apparent result. For *when* does it come? Immediately after the winter. This tells us never to despair, never to despond. God needs the winter for souls to prepare for the spring; but He never forgets to bring the spring when the time has come.

VI. The spring has another voice—a voice which sounds away into the far future, and foretells "the time of the restitution of all things." God, in renewing the face of the earth, seems to give us a visible picture and bright image of that blessed moral renovation which is coming in the fulness of the time.

VII. Spring gives announcement of the general resurrection from the dead.

VIII. Spring tells us that all our earthly time is the spring season of our existence.

A. RALEIGH, *Quiet Resting-places*, p. 347.

I. SPRING is an awakening. We say, The year awakes from its winter sleep; nature opens its eyes. So is the turning of the soul to God. It was a soul asleep; it is a soul awake. It has heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest;" and it is opening its eyes on a new world, a new time, new thoughts, new possibilities, a blessed new life. Christ is the Prince whose touch awakens the soul from its winter sleep. The joy of the awakening soul is a new creation, by the word of Him who went near to lost souls to bring them to God.

II. Spring is the manifestation of life. It is life which sings among the branches. It is life which prattles in the brook. It is life which clothes the trees with verdure, and the furrows with the tender shoots of corn. It is life which stirs in the converted soul. Conversion itself is but a manifestation of life. The soul has been born again, has been revived, quickened, raised from the dead to newness of life. The life we are invited to live is nothing other, is nothing lower, than God's own life. And this life has been given to us in Jesus Christ. In Him is the fountain of life.

III. Spring is also a gateway. It is the gateway to the harvest—seedtime first, then harvest. At the gateway of the year, a promise; at the end, fulfilment. In conversion the gateway is opened for the soul to go in and seek its fruit from God. The harvest of a single soul—can the worth of that be summed up? A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 45.

I. THE vast importance to us that this season should regularly and infallibly return in its time is obvious the instant it is mentioned. But it is not so instantly recollected how entirely we are at the mercy of the God of nature for its return.

II. Consider, next, this beautiful vernal season. What a gloomy and unpromising scene and season it rises out of! Might we not take instruction from this to correct the judgments we are prone to form of the Divine government?

III. How welcome are the early signs and precursory appearances of the spring! The operation of the Divine Spirit in renovating the human soul, effecting its conversion from the natural state, is sometimes displayed in this gentle and gradual manner, especially in youth.

IV. The next observation on the spring season is, How reluctantly the worse gives place to the better. It is too obvious to need pointing out how much resembling this there is in the moral state of things.

V. We may contemplate the lavish, boundless diffusion, riches, and variety of beauty in the spring. Reflect what a display is here of the boundless resources of the great Author. Such unlimited profusion may well assure us that He who can afford thus to lavish treasures so far beyond what is simply necessary can never fail of resources for all that is, or ever shall be, necessary.

VI. This pleasant season has always been regarded as obviously presenting an image of youthful life. The newness, liveliness, fair appearance, exuberance, of the vital principle,

rapid growth—such are the fair points of likeness. But there are also less pleasing circumstances of resemblance: the frailty and susceptibility, so peculiarly liable to fatal injury from inauspicious influences, blights, and diseases.

VII. To a person in the latter stages of life, if destitute of the sentiments and expectations of religion, this world of beauty must lose its captivations; it must even take a melancholy aspect, for what should strike him so directly and forcibly as the thought that he is soon to leave it? On the contrary, and by the same rule, this fair display of the Creator's works and resources will be gratifying the most and the latest to the soul animated with the love of God and the confidence of soon entering on a nobler scene.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 128.

Psalm civ., ver. 30.—"Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created: and Thou renewest the face of the earth."

THE breath of the Most High, mentioned in the text, is the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, the Third Person in the Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son to give life, and order, and harmony to His creatures, especially to make His reasonable creatures, angels and men, partakers of His unspeakable holiness.

I. If this parable of breath be well considered, it may seem to account for other like parables, so to call them, by which Holy Scripture teaches us to think of this our most holy Comforter. For instance, the Holy Spirit is sometimes compared to the wind, as in the discourse of our Saviour to Nicodemus. Thus the wind, when we hear or feel it, may remind us of the breath of Almighty God; and the effects of the wind—the clouds which it brings over the earth, the moisture which the air takes up, the news which descend, the rains which pour down, the springs which gush out, the waters which flow over the earth—all these are in Scripture tokens of the same Spirit, showing Himself in gifts and sanctifying graces and communicating spiritual life to His people.

II. We are hereby taught to think of our own spiritual and hidden life, the life which we have concealed and laid up for us with Christ in God, the life which is altogether of faith, not at all of sight. Whatever puts us in mind of the Holy Spirit puts us in mind of that life, for He is "the Lord and Giver of life." The natural life of the first Adam was a gift of the Spirit, a token of His Divine presence, but much more so the spiritual life which Christians have by union with the second Adam.

III. Whatever else we do, then, or refrain from doing, let us at least endeavour to open our eyes and contemplate our real condition. The outward world indeed is to us the same as if we were no Christians; the breath of heaven is around us, the dew falls, the winds blow, the rain descends, the waters gush out, and all the other works of nature go on as if we had never been taken out of this wicked world and placed in the kingdom of God: but in reality we know that there is a meaning and power in all these common things which they can have to none but Christians. The good Spirit is around us on every side; He is within us; we are His temples: only let us so live, that we force Him not to depart from us at last.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 144.

REFERENCES: civ. 30.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 52; J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 164; A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 8; H. Wonnacott, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 314; G. Avery, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 269; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 172; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 382.

Psalm civ., vers. 31-33.—"The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in His works," etc.

I. IN God, in the ever-blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—we and every living thing live, and move, and have our being. He is the Infinite, whom nothing, however huge, and vast, and strong, can comprehend; that is, take in and limit. He takes in and limits all things, giving to each thing form according to its own kind, and life and growth according to its own law. Therefore everything which we see is a thought of God's, an action of God's, a message to us from God. We can look neither at the sun in the sky nor at the grass beneath our feet without being brought face to face with God, the ever-blessed Trinity.

II. If God be so awful in the material world, of which our five senses tell us, how much more awful is He in that spiritual and moral world of which our senses tell us nought! How awful is God in that eternal world of right and wrong, wherein cherubim, seraphim, angel, and archangel cry to Him for ever, not merely "Mighty! mighty! mighty!" but "Holy! holy! holy!" so awful that we might well be overwhelmed with dread and horror at the sight of God's righteousness and our sinfulness were it not for the gracious message of revelation that tells us that God the Father of heaven is our Father likewise, who so loved us that He gave

for us His only-begotten, God the Son, that for His sake our sins might be freely forgiven us; that God the Son is our Atonement, our Redeemer, our King, our Intercessor, our Example, our Saviour in life and death, and God the Holy Ghost our Comforter, our Guide, our Inspirer, who will give to our souls the eternal life which will never perish, even as He gives to our bodies the mortal life which must perish.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day, and Other Sermons*, p. 142.

REFERENCES: civ. 33.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 273. civ. 33-35.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxi., p. 338.

Psalm civ., ver. 34.—"My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord."

MEDITATION is the calm and quiet dwelling of the mind upon a great fact till that fact has time to get into the mind and pervade it with its influence. Meditation is the quiet thinking on single truths, the steady setting of attentive thought drawn away from other things and concentrated on this alone.

I. The words of the text imply a personal relationship; that is, the relation of the human person who thinks towards a Divine Person on whom he meditates. All through it is the personal, living God whom the psalmist saw, the God who thought, and felt, and schemed, and ruled, and loved, and with whom the psalmist himself was brought into relation. Not an abstract or distant Deity is He who calls out the adoration of His human creatures, but One in whom we live, and move, and have our being, round about our path and about our bed, and searching out all our ways.

II. Consider whence comes the sweetness of this exercise of the head and heart. (1) It is sweet to think of the love of Christ, and especially to realise that we, with all our conscious unworthiness, are the objects of it. (2) It is sweet to dwell on the love-tokens of our absent Saviour. (3) It is sweet to anticipate the time when we shall meet Him, "whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

E. GARBETT, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 191.

REFERENCES: civ.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 174; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 60.

Psalm cv., ver. 17 (Prayer-book version).—"But He had sent a man before them."

I. ISRAEL went down into Egypt to buy food, and found one of

themselves at the head of the government; and from that Divine provision flowed in natural order the whole after-Bible story. A local famine ministered to the scheme of the world's salvation; out of partial evil came universal good. The Gospel feast was remotely spread through the jealousy of Jacob's sons, and in the pressure of the great dearth. The presence of evil in God's world must ever remain an unfathomable mystery. The book of Genesis shows us, indeed, the beginning of evil upon the earth; but it represents evil as already existent, and as being brought into this world by a tempter not of this world. There is thus a chapter before the first chapter of Genesis, which remains unwritten. A lesser mystery than the creation of evil is the sufferance of evil. God, who created it not, permits it, uses it for His own purposes. The darkness which hangs about even the sufferance of evil, both moral and physical, is in a measure lightened by the remembrance that He who permits evil sees at the selfsame moment, not as a future, but as a present, thing, the good which comes out of it. It was so with the history of Joseph. It was so with the scheme of man's redemption through Christ. And so with the discipline of our daily life. To us the multitude of events which mark the lapse of the years, even in the most uniform lives, appear to come tumbling upon one another, like the waves of the sea. He in whose hand is the soul of every living thing has laid long before the whole train of circumstances by which we are to be tried. The ministering angel was commissioned ere the messenger of Satan was permitted to buffet. Nay more, the increased hope and strength, all those high spiritual graces which are formed in saintly souls by endurance, were present things to the eternal eye, not visions of the future, when He arranged the trial.

II. From this doctrine flow several principles of faith and practice. (1) In the light of these truths, how strongly comes out to view the supernatural character of the commonest events in which we play our part! (2) A keen recognition of these "previsions of God" leads to spiritual repose in the midst of worldly disquiet. God employs evil for His purposes of good. Man may not do evil that good may come. Three great attributes of God account for the difference: (*a*) His infinite knowledge; (*b*) His certain control; (*c*) His perfect holiness.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 143.

REFERENCES: cv. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1277. cv. 24.—G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 140. cvi. 4, 5.—

Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1454; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 235. cvi. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 115. cvi. 9.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii., No. 72. cvi. 13.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 259.

Psalm cvi., ver. 15.—"And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."

It is an awful circumstance, and yet it is true, that our mercies may be our curses; that our desire may prove our ruin. The man, you will say, who has obtained the object of his desire, whether through prayer or toil, ought to be happy. He sows, and reaps abundantly; he casts his nets into the sea, and brings them up full of fish; all his bargains end in gain: he might have in his possession the philosopher's stone, which turns all it touches into gold. But there is a dark set-off against all this. When you come to look down through the man's circumstances into himself, you find what the psalmist here terms leanness; and by leanness he means waste, emaciation, loss of strength and beauty. What is this leanness? How shall we discover its presence in ourselves or others?

I. By its trust in outward things. You hardly need to be told that one of the dangers which always beset us is that of placing our confidence in things that are in our sight and within the reach of our hand. And the more these things multiply around us, the greater our danger becomes. Grace is needed by every man, but great grace is needed by the man who gets his request. The eclipsing power of success is fearful.

II. Another symptom of spiritual leanness, and one of the results of having our request, is self-pleasing. We do not live in a heroic age. Like men under the influence of a Southern climate, our stamina is becoming deteriorated. We covet rest rather than labour, enjoyment rather than self-sacrifice for our own real good or that of others. It is no calumny to say that pleasure is the god of our times, and that men are shrinking more and more from everything which involves self-oblivion and self-sacrifice. But this spirit defeats itself. Pleasure sought for its own sake is difficult to find, more difficult still to retain, and becomes more coy and unattainable the more the pursuit of it becomes the aim and the business of life.

III. Loss of sympathy with all that helps to build up the spiritual life. There is no life save that of God Himself which possesses a self-perpetuating power; and though the life which

is begotten in us by faith is the highest on earth, even that is not immortal if it be denied the food which has been provided for it. Our text speaks to us as with the voice of a trumpet, and rings out the great and impressive truth that we cannot be too guarded in our petitions or in our desires for merely temporal things. Beyond necessaries all else should be sought in very humble and willing subordination to the will of God. For who of us knows what beyond these is good for us?

E. MELLOR, *In the Footsteps of Heroes*, p. 106.

THE principle of the text applies:—

I. To the man who starts life with an idea that to be rich is the highest result of labour.

II. To all who would escape from painful duty in order that they may indulge love of ease and quiet.

III. To men who make all their arrangements with a view to the comfort of their physical tastes exclusively.

IV. The judgment of God falls on the highest nature; it falls on the soul. The man on whom God's disapprobation rests withers at his very root. His mental power declines; his moral nature shrivels; he goes down in the volume and quality of his being.

V. The great lesson from this text is to say from the heart, with trembling yet earnest love, "Not our will, but Thine, be done." The school in which this great lesson can be learned is called the Cross.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 147.

Psalm cvi., ver. 19.—"They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image."

I. THE mixture of infirmity and strength, of earnest aim and second motive, among the people of God, is, and must ever be, a matter of anxious question; and it is for that, among many other things, that the people of God cry out for the great Resurrection, and look with love to His appearing. The very grace and virtue with which a man strives is paled by vice directly its contradictory, and the very point which seems to be a man's strong point becomes his weak one. In a general view Aaron appears before us as the first high-priest, the elaborator with Moses of the great ceremonial of the early Church. Yet Aaron could worship an idol; and with the mind which had been inspired to celebrate the sacred worship, and with the hand which had been aiding in its construction, he could devise and work the golden calf.

II. The conflicts of Aaron with Moses are very remarkable. There is a mixture of respect and jealousy in the conduct of the high-priest which excites our surprise. We find Aaron and Miriam conspiring against the authority of Moses, and that from a manifest feeling of jealousy. With a heaven-sent commission to respect the elevated position of Moses, Aaron nevertheless in the most singular way opposed the authority and assailed the office of the lawgiver.

III. These contradictions are not uncommon among the people of God; but the singular circumstance is that it is not simply the inconsistency which we are struck with, but the actual contradiction given to the leading virtue by the contrary vice appearing in the same character. There is more than one way of accounting for this. (1) The presence of a leading tendency to good throws many men off their guard with respect to some virtue; and unfenced on the side of the correlative vice, they the more easily fall. (2) The fact of official position and responsibility is the real cause of our high expectations and estimate of the character. (3) When the mind is steadily and almost exclusively directed to one great object, there is always a tendency to err on the side of neglect of duty in respect of that very object. Few objects of human contemplation or study will bear such close investigation as to appear the more true and certain by deeper investigation. We live on a surface. The ripple reflects light and brilliance, and the belt of waters below moves in a dull and sullen mass. A deeper insight disappoints. So it is that the man whose vocation is clear and definite will err in indefiniteness in that very vocation, and inconsistency will constantly run in a parallel line with the fulfilment of the daily vocation.

E. MONRO, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 519.

Psalm cvi., ver. 24 (Prayer-book version).—"Yea, they thought scorn of that pleasant land: and gave no credence unto His word."

I. WITHOUT the promised land, what was the life of Moses? What was the life of the people? In reading the Scripture account, the general impression is of a very weary, hard-worked life for Moses; much disappointment, vexation, and trouble; hard work and little thanks for it. And it is true. His martyrdom when he lost his throne, his forty years of daily self-abasement in the wilderness, *did* end for him in this fierce, patient penalty of leading a mean people on the way to greatness, with all the present pain and nothing to compensate for the pain, saving

only the feeling within of stronger life day by day for himself, clearer sight of God, a calmer heart, a greater self-mastery, with the sweetness of such liberty in his soul; and, next, the certainty of working with God, which made all the labour, all the suffering, the joy of the champion for the King he loved; and, lastly, the promised land, the blessing of Abraham coming true, the sweet conviction of victory and peace.

II. The promised land first and the Messiah, the King, who was to reign over them in the promised land—these two thoughts were the daily joy and hope of every Israelite who was not a traitor. And the bitter accusation of treason brought against them by the psalmist was, "Yea, they thought scorn of that pleasant land." The Israelite in the wilderness looked on the promised land with exactly the same present feeling that a man now looks forward to success in his profession. There was to be no change whatever in them, only change in their circumstances. We shall never live life truly till we have got *our going home* into the same practical, true groove that they had.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 424.

REFERENCES: cvi. 24.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 193. cvi. 44, 45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1886.

Psalm cvi., ver. 48.—"And let all the people say, Amen."

I. "AMEN" is a word of which all the associations are, or ought to be, interesting. (1) With this word did our Lord Jesus Christ Himself introduce most of His most impressive revelations. By this term, expressing certainty, faithfulness, unchangeable truth, He embodied in daily utterance that which on one occasion at least He expanded into a doctrine—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen"—with a positiveness of intuition and insight belonging to Him, and to Him only, who is at once He that came down from heaven and the Son of man who is in heaven. (2) In this word does St. Paul gather up the whole sum of the revelations of Christ and say, "All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen." (3) By this same word does the beloved disciple St. John actually designate the very person of his Master: "These things saith the Amen," etc.

II. The force and significance of the word must vary: (1) with the place in which it occurs in our services; (2) according to the mind of the worshipper by whom it is used.

III. The conditions of joining rightly in this particular part of our service are the same with those which we know to be the conditions of public worship in general. You must be desirous of meeting God. You must be desirous of finding God. You must come with that desire and stay with that desire.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 150.

REFERENCES: cvi. 48.—J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 177. cvii. 4-7.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 86.

Psalm cvii., ver. 6.—"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses."

I. IN all the changes of this mortal life, the psalmist sees no real chance, no real change, but the orderly education of a just and loving Father, whose mercy endureth for ever, who chastens men as a father chastens his children, for their profit, that they may be partakers of His holiness, in which alone are life and joy, health and wealth. It seems at first the worst of news, that which the Ninth Article tells us: that our original sin, in every person born into this world, deserves God's wrath and curse. And so it would be the worst of news if God were merely a Judge, inflicting so much pain and misery for so much sin, without any wish to mend us and save us. But if we remember the blessed message of the Psalm; if we will remember that God is our Father, that God is educating us, that God hath neither parts nor passions, and that therefore God's wrath is not different or contrary to His love, but that God's wrath is His love in another shape, punishing men just because He loves men, then the Ninth Article will bring us the very best of news. If our sin had not deserved God's anger, then He would not have been angry with it; and then He would have left it alone, instead of condemning it and dooming it to everlasting destruction as He has done; and then, if our sin had been left alone, we should have been left alone to sin and sin on, growing continually more wicked till our sin became our ruin. But now God hates our sin and loves us; and therefore He desires above all things to deliver us from sin and burn our sin up in His unquenchable fire, that we ourselves may not be burned up therein.

II. If these words seem strange to some of you, that will only be a fresh proof to me that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Ghost. Nothing shows me how wide, how deep, how

wise, how heavenly, the Bible is, as to see how far average Christians are behind the Bible in their way of thinking, how the salvation which it offers is too free for them, the love which it proclaims too wide for them, the God whom it reveals too good for them, so that they shrink from taking the Bible and trusting the Bible in its fulness and believing honestly the blessed truth that God is love.

C. KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 446.

Psalm cvii., ver. 7.—"And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."

NOTICE one or two particular features of the leadings in the wilderness.

I. The Israelites had a very little way to go, and they were a very long time about it. What seemed a matter of days took many years. Is it so with you? Have you been a very long time getting on a very little way?

II. The fightings of God's people in the wilderness were all at the beginning and at the end of it. It is generally so with God's saints.

III. They had strange ups and downs. Their road, as we trace it on the map, is a perfect riddle, now quite near and then back again, far, far away, almost to where they set out.

IV. It was all in dependence—most absolute and humble dependence for everything. Not a drop nor a crumb, nothing, came from the wilderness, all direct from God Himself. Who ever went the road to heaven without learning, temporally and spiritually, the same humiliating but assuring lesson?

V. The leading was the clearest where the need was the greatest, God's universal method. In our sunny days His hand dimly seen, and His voice low, but in our darkest hours bright, distinct, glorious.

VI. It was a restless life they lived these forty years, just as perhaps life has been to us. We are but strangers and pilgrims. We must sit loose and not tarry long by the way. It is "the right way," but it is only a way. And we are prone to say, "It was good for me to be here!" and mistake our tabernacles for our houses, while He is all the while leading us forth to go to a city of habitation.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 12th series, p. 213.

I. THE company. Any considerable company of men is imposing; but here is a company more illustrious than any other upon earth, a company overwhelming in its vastness and

yet ever growing in numbers, calm in aspect and yet irresistible in power. These are "the redeemed of the Lord, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." We are redeemed from spiritual perils and foes: from sin, from wrath, from the lure of the world, from the wiles of the devil, and from selfishness, sluggishness, lust, passion, pride, fear, doubt, dismay. It is impossible that a man can be "led forth into the right way" until this deliverance is accomplished, until it is at least begun.

II. The Leader. The Leader of this ransomed company is the Lord Himself. "*He* led them forth." The Bible abounds with intimations of the nearness of God, and particularly with assurances of His actual and perpetual presence with His people as their Guide, and Guard, and everlasting Friend. "Be still, and know that He is God"—God to supply all your need, to guide all your way, to give far more than He takes, to do for you "exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think."

III. The way. This way, as God's appointed way, is right, whatever may be its present aspect to us. Haply to some it is covered with the clouds of disappointment; to others it is bleak and cold with the gales of adversity; to others it is drenched with the rains of sorrow. It has places of heart-wringing separation from fellow-pilgrims, and even deep, dark gulfs of sin; but notwithstanding all its mystery, as God's way, it is always right.

IV. The end. The end is arrival and rest in "the city of habitation"—in some secure and permanent abode; the wanderer finds at last a settled rest: the lost and worn traveller is conducted back into the way, and the way leads him home. And what more appropriate end could there be to such a way as that of the Christian through this life than the heaven that has been promised and prepared for all who are truly seeking it? The mystic company has not been gathered and redeemed with such cost and toil only to be scattered again and lost. The Leader has not assumed His position at their head to see them falling and vanishing away, for "He is able to make them stand." The way has not been opened and consecrated for short distances only, with gulfs and deserts left in it that cannot be crossed; it stretches away beyond earthly territory and mortal sight, and ends at the open gate of heaven.

A. RALEIGH, *Farewell Sermon Preached in Glasgow*, Dec. 12th, 1858.

REFERENCES: cvii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 143; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 127; T. L. Cuyler, *Preacher's*

Monthly, vol. iii., p. 29; J. Eadie, *Good Words*, 1861, p. 413; M. Nicholson, *Redeeming the Time*, p. 18. cvii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 338.

Psalm cvii., ver. 14 (Prayer-book version).—"For He brought them out of darkness and out of the shadow of death, and brake their bonds in sunder."

THE Bible does not aspire to provide checks for the excesses of freedom, but to instruct us in the nature of freedom, to stimulate an appetite for it, to make us ashamed of our contentment without it, to explain under what conditions we may obtain the highest measure of it.

I. Do we not hear men complaining continually that they cannot do what they would, or be what they would? Each may shift the burden on a different place, but each feels it. If the sigh for pardon has not yet risen out of our hearts, that sigh may yet be working in another form—apparently, not really another. We may cry for an *Absolver*, for One who will set us free from the bonds of those sins which by our frailty we have committed. The voice of God, be sure, is not monotonous; it does not speak in one accent only, and that one measured, and adapted, and reduced by human art. Whatever a man's perplexity is, whatever it be which makes his actions irregular, his thoughts unquiet, his life contradictory, that is a band which needs to be broken for him, and which, after infinite fretting, he will find that he cannot break for himself, not if he has all the machinery of nature and art to help out his individual weakness. He must turn to the Lord of his will, to One who can meet him there, in a region which the vulture's eye has not seen.

II. It is the Son who makes us free, because He brings us the adoption of sons. It is the faith that in Him these spirits of ours may claim God for their Father, because He has in Him claimed them for His sons and given them His Spirit, that they may cry, "Abba, Father"—it is this faith which raises us above the flesh that has claimed to be our master, when it was meant to be our slave; above that world of which we were intended to offer the fruits to God, but which has demanded our worship for itself; above that spirit of evil which would persuade us that there cannot be freedom in the service of a loving God, and if we listen to it, would make us the slaves of self-will and hatred.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 149.

REFERENCES: cvii. 14.—G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 142. cvii. 17-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1824. cvii. 19.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 117. cvii. 20.—H. Thompson

Concionalia, 2nd series, p. 529; *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, p. 271. cvii. 21.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., pp. 312, 321, 341, 357, and 375. cvii. 23, 24.—C. Kingsley, *Discipline, and Other Sermons*, p. 23. cvii. 23-31.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 236. cvii. 30.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 323. cvii. 34.—J. Keble, *Sermons Occasional and Parochial*, p. 101. cvii. 40.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 369. cvii. 40, 41.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 238. cvii. 43.—E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 392. cviii. 4.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 213. cviii. 12.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 242. cviii. 22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 121. cix. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 15.

Psalm cvii., ver. 30 (Prayer-book version).—**"Then are they glad, because they are at rest: and so He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be."**

THESE words naturally lead us to consider two things :—

I. The joy of being at rest. There are several kinds of rest which may indeed be subjects of thankfulness and gladness. There is the rest from enemies without; there is the rest from passions within; and there is the eternal rest of heaven. But the kind of rest of which we think to-day is the rest from *doubt*, doubt especially as to what it is needful to believe and to do if we seek to get to heaven. The very idea of rest implies something *on* which to rest; that is, it implies something above and beyond ourselves: it proves that in and of ourselves we can never have rest. Moses, speaking to the children of Israel, says, "Ye shall not do as we do here this day: every man that which is right in his own eyes." And why not? "For ye are not come unto the rest and the land which the Lord your God giveth you." No man has any more right to believe what he likes than to do what he likes; there is but one thing every one ought to do, which is right, and but one thing every one ought to believe, which is truth: and a man will as surely be punished for believing wrong as he will be for doing wrong.

II. But how can we believe? you will ask. And that brings us to our second head; namely, that we must be at rest before we can reach "the haven where we would be." In other words, unless we believe rightly, we shall never enter into heaven. No man can live as he ought without believing as he ought. Our Saviour, Christ, has promised this. "If any man," He says, "will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Therefore it follows that no man who believes wrong can be living right.

J. M. NEALE, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 226.

REFERENCE: cix. 7.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, p. 94.

Psalm cix., ver. 8.—**"Let his days be few; and let another take his office."**

As often as we keep St. Matthias' Day, we keep the memorial of the sin and misery of the traitor Judas also; and our thoughts are carried back to that severe and awful Psalm, the hundred and ninth, which contains at large the sentence of the everlasting Judge on such wickedness as his, that kind of wickedness which is properly called apostacy, when such as have been brought unusually near to God fall away from Him, and their fall, by a most just judgment, brings a curse proportionate to their first blessing.

I. Two circumstances of the punishment of such as Judas are expressed in the text: "Let his days be few, and let another take his office," or bishopric. The words in themselves sound simple enough; they might seem to speak of no more than all human beings must undergo by the necessity of their mortal nature. All our days are few; they are but as grass; they are gone almost before we can count them. All our places, stations, and offices, whatever they may be, must soon pass away from us, and another take them in our place. But this, the common lot of all, is here turned into a fearful and peculiar curse for those who slight high privileges and betray sacred trusts.

II. These very circumstances are means in God's hand to lessen the quantity of mischief which is done by those who fall from Him. Christ so ordained that the very downfall of one of His own Apostles, which beforehand one would expect to be well nigh the ruin of the Church, was made consistent with its continuance and prosperity.

III. The Scriptures appear to signify that this dispensation concerning Judas was a kind of type or pattern of God's dealings with the whole Jewish people when they proved unfaithful. Whereas it is written of Judas, "Let another take his office," we know that the Christian Church, gathered from among both Jews and Gentiles, has been put in the place of Israel, to be God's minister, and by its union with Christ to be priest, prophet, and ruler on earth. Now it is a serious and alarming thought for us all, If Judas Iscariot, who, favoured as he was, had never received the Holy Ghost; if the Jewish people, whose highest privileges were but a shadow of what we receive in baptism—if they had their days cut off by so dreadful a sentence, and their place in God's world given over to others, what are Christian pastors to expect should they after all prove unclean and unworthy? It is a fearful thought how near

we may go—how near, alas! we have gone—towards forfeiting our privileges and bringing the traitor's curse upon us.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vi., p. 41.

THE Psalmist's words declared the utter overthrow of the house of Judas, but the continuation of the office which he held. His house was to be desolate, but not so his apostolical throne. Such was the prophetic intimation of the Spirit of God; and in obedience thereto, the eleven disciples proceeded to the election of a successor to the lost Apostle. "The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles."

There is a fearful light, as it were, around the apostleship of Matthias. We cannot think of him without recalling him who went before. Surely, we imagine, he must have gone about the work of an apostle with a fear and a trembling which even Peter never knew.

I. Consider how far the case of Matthias is our own, and how far therefore his feelings should be ours also. (1) The whole Christian Church stands to the Jewish race as Matthias to Iscariot. The Israelites were the first called to be God's special servants; to them was the commission given to keep alive the remembrance of His name, to make His praise to be glorious. They betrayed the trust; they adhered not to His worship; they gave His honour to another; they stoned His prophets; they rejected His Son. And then went forth the decree, "Let their days be few, and let another take their office." There is a voice from the past to the present, from the old Israel to the new, which bids us not to be high-minded, but fear, as those who fill a traitor's place. (2) Not only is the Christian Church the successor of the repudiated Jewish Church, but the whole race of man is the successor upon trial to the fallen armies of the sky. Before us now is placed the choice which ages ago was given to Satan and his legions: the choice whether in sincerity and truth we will be the servants of the Son of God.

II. From what has been advanced we learn in a most striking manner: (1) the sureness with which God's will is accomplished sooner or later; (2) the wonderful uniformity of the test to which God has subjected all His creatures. The test is simply loyalty to the only-begotten Son.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i., p. 67.

REFERENCES: cix. 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, pp.

154-165. cix.—J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 325. cx. 1.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 58; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 269; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 129.

Psalm cx., ver. 2.—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth."

We have here the very heart of the Christian character set forth as being willing consecration; then we have the work which Christian men have to do, and the spirit in which they are to do it, expressed in that metaphor of their priestly attire; and then we have their refreshing and quickening influence upon the world.

I. The subjects of the Priest-King are willing soldiers. In accordance with the warlike tone of the whole Psalm, our text describes the subjects as an army. The King is going forth to conquest. But He goes not alone. Behind him come His faithful followers, all pressing on with willing hearts and high courage. Then (1) the warfare which He wages is one not confined to Him. (2) That warfare is shared in by all the subjects. It is a levy *en masse*—an armed nation. (3) There are no mercenaries in these ranks, no pressed men. The soldiers are all volunteers. "Thy people shall be willing." (4) The soldiers are not only marked by glad obedience, but that obedience rests upon the sacrifice of themselves. This glad submission has come from self-consecration and surrender. (5) By a natural transition, the word "willing" comes to mean "free," and also "noble." The willing service which rests upon glad consecration raises him who renders it to true freedom and dominion. The Prince's servants are every other person's masters.

II. The soldiers are priests. "The beauties of holiness" is a frequent phrase for the sacerdotal garments, the holy, festal attire of the priests of the Lord. The conquering King whom the Psalm hymns is a Priest for ever; and He is followed by an army of priests. (1) Mark now the warfare which we have to wage is the same as the priestly service which we have to render. The conflict is with our own sin and evil; the sacrifice we have to offer is ourselves. (2) The great power which we Christian men are to wield in our loving warfare is *character*. (3) The image suggests the spirit in which our priestly warfare is to be waged. We are to be soldier-priests, strong and

gentle, like the ideal of those knights of old, who were both, and bore the cross on shield, and helmet, and sword-hilt.

III. The soldier-priests are as dew upon the earth. We have here: (1) A picture of the army as a band of youthful warriors. He who has fellowship with God and lives in the constant reception of the supernatural life and grace which comes from Jesus Christ possesses the secret of perpetual youth. (2) The lovely emblem of the dew as applied to Christ's servants. It is as a symbol of the refreshing which a weary world will receive from the conquests and presence of the King and His host that they are likened to the glittering morning dew.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 321.

I. CONSIDER what is meant by the expression that Christ's people are a willing people. (1) This indicates that a vast change has been made upon them, for there is no man naturally inclined to follow and to obey the Saviour. (2) The willingness which is here spoken of is not to be regarded as a mere point of doctrinal theology, but as a great practical reality. A willing people is a people willing for whatever is Christ's will, because they love Him and trust Him.

II. Notice the decorations of Christ's people. "They appear in the beauties of holiness." Holiness is the peculiar and indispensable mark of Christ's people, and that which distinguishes them as His. The holy man, besides having all the distinguishing qualities of the good man, is one who loathes all impurity in thought, or speech, or conduct. When Christ's people are said to be clothed with the beauties of holiness, this implies that they are not only characterised by their outward conformity to the law of God, but that they seek to have the whole frame of the heart—every thought, every feeling, every breathing of the soul—regulated by God's holy will.

III. Notice what is here said respecting the number of Christ's followers. "They are as the dewdrops from the womb of the morning." This Psalm describes Messiah's triumphs over all His enemies. These shall not be completed until the morning of the Resurrection. Then it will be that this beautiful prophecy shall have its full accomplishment.

IV. Notice the way and time in which sinners are made Christ's willing followers. It is in the day of His power. (1) As to the way of it. Not by the power of eloquence of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord, are the rebels subdued, and the

unholy sanctified. Christ administers His government not so much by terror as by love. (2) As to the time at which Christ makes His people willing. It is the *day* of His power. Christ, indeed, has always the same power; but there are special seasons for the special exercise of it.

V. Observe how all these things redound to the glory of Christ.

A. D. DAVIDSON, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 66.

REFERENCES: CX. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No 74; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 104; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 130; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 397; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 132; A. Pope, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 37.

Psalm CX., ver. 3.—"Thou hast the dew of Thy youth."

I. EVERYTHING young and fresh, everything bright and smiling, everything buoyant and happy, may be traced to the perpetual youth of Godhead, which streams forth for ever and ever, impregnating all receptive souls and substances with its own quality. Every babe, and every spring, and every new morning are world-types of the everlasting youth of our God. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The eternal yesterday saw Him young; He is young to-day; His energies will abide unimpaired and young for ever. The late children of time still call Him "the holy Child Jesus."

II. Through His youth heaven abides young. The eternity of heaven will but perfect the youth of its first morning. Every heir of heaven, on being born from death into blessed primitive eternity, finds it morning.

III. Though Jesus appeared in our nature expressly to bear our sins and sorrows, yet both friends and enemies were impressed with the energy and originality of His character, two unquestionable signs of youth. He spake as One who saw the old creation with young eyes, and as One who felt the poetic relation between all things and man. His last discourse was the freshest, the sweetest, and the youngest.

IV. All who love Him shall shine forth in His kingdom in the glory of perpetual youth, "as the sun for ever and ever." Trust Him, love Him, abide in Him, and the energy and freshness of His life shall spring up in the heart of your heart. Embrace Jesus, and you will find all the beauties of holiness; they abide in Him, in the Divinity of their youth, for ever.

J. PULSFORD, *Quiet Hours*, p. 270.

REFERENCES: CX.—E. Bickersteth, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v.,

p. 84; W. H. Simcox, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. i.; *Good Words*, 1877, p. 274. cxi. 9.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 239. cxi. 10.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iv., p. 506.

Psalm cx., ver. 4.—"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

SET apart from before all worlds for His priestly work, Christ in due time occupied His office. Consider Him in His wonderful exercise of its functions, which are threefold: to sacrifice, to intercede, to bless.

I. What a sacrifice was that when the sacrificer and the victim met in one and the same Person! His amazing endurance cast into the scales of Divine justice an equivalent, a more than equivalent, for the punishment of every sin of every sinner of every generation. That one vast sacrifice outweighed it all.

II. But great as was the sacrifice, the Apostle St. Paul leads us to the thought that the intercession was greater still: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life," etc.; that is, by His intercession which He lives to make.

III. Christ in His priestly office is appointed to bless. Our better Melchizedek is gone in, in His human form, "into the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man;" a little space He tarries for His Church's sake within the veil; and presently we shall behold Him coming forth in His perfect beauty: and standing on the clouds of heaven, at the portals of glory, He will pronounce benediction on His Church.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 29.

REFERENCES: cx. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 75; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 398.

Psalm cxii., ver. 4.—"Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."

THE principle of the text, being a general and universal truth, ought to be applicable to matters of faith, to matters of experience, and to matters of practice.

I. Matters of faith. By matters of faith are meant those revealed truths which are to be apprehended by us, and accepted, and held fast, and turned to perpetual use for guidance, health, salvation. We all begin in darkness. And we get into the light, not in an easy, natural, irresistible manner, but by hints and

suggestions at first, by help of broken gleams, and through falling shadows, through doubts, and uncertainties, and frequent misconception, by gropings, and hesitations, and discoveries, held often in the restriction of our own narrowness, circumscribed always by necessary limits, liable always to mistakes, and at no time holding the complete and perfect truth. "Unto the upright light ariseth." "He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Inward loyalty to truth, the fine, pure temper of sincerity, the habit of obedience —these are wonderful revealers.

II. Matters of experience. There are many who, at least to their own consciousness, seem to have before them, and quite clearly, truth enough to do all they long for: to rule their lives sweetly and bring their hearts in childlike trust to God. And yet the constant trouble is that these and the like things are not done. They have darkness of the heart and no light arising. Yes, but it will arise. Unto the upright it ariseth, everywhere, in everything, and therefore assuredly in things of the heart. Only be sure you seek heart-light "lawfully." It is fruit, and not root. It is consequence, not cause. Seek first the righteousness of the inward kingdom, and the light will come out of that.

III. The text is true in matters of practice. We must go along the line that seems the line of duty. "Light is sown for the righteous;" but, like all living seed, it takes a while to spring. The days of sowing are sometimes chill and dark. The bright harvest days will make amends for all.

A. RALEIGH, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 232.

REFERENCES: cxii. 4.—E. Bersier, *Sermons*, 2nd series, pp. 273, 286. cxii. 6.—A. P. Stanley, *Good Words*, 1877, p. 548. cxii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 647; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 259. cxiii. 7, 8.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 658. cxiii. 8.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 209.

Psalm cxiv., ver. 8 (with Deut. xxxii., ver. 13).—"Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters," etc.

I. Is it not instructive to us that things so high have become so low; that firmamental elements offer themselves, in the shape of stones, for the humblest uses? How beautifully passive they are to all operators and operations. They are as meekly submissive to the lowest uses as to the highest.

II. Hear another stone-sermon: We are stones, and you are souls. Our day of freedom is coming. Take heed, O souls,

lest in the day of God, when stones shall awake to light, you should enter the house of darkness and bondage.

III. Stones are stubborn things, but stubborn souls are the stubbornest stones. Stones are less capable of resisting the influences of nature than souls the influences of God.

IV. Hear the stones once more, and from their heart of hearts: We are stones, and you are souls; but your Lord is our Lord, and our Lord is your Lord. He made us, and not we ourselves; and there is not a stone that is not pervaded through and through by His presence. When He died, souls mocked Him; but stones trembled to their centre.

V. We are stones, and you are souls. When the Lord lay enclosed in stone, we offered no resistance to His resurrection. Have you yielded, that He might rise from the dead in you?

VI. We have the substance of stones, but there is no stony will in us to resist Him whom nothing ought to resist. You have the substance of souls; but you carry within you a stony will, by which you resist your Lord, as stones never did. *It is better to be stones than such souls.*

J. PULSFORD, *Quiet Hours*, p. 241.

REFERENCES: cxv. 3.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 8. cxv. 12.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 249. cxv. 15—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1077.

Psalm cxv., ver. 16.—"The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men."

THE heavens and the earth are set in contrast with each other. And their contrast is in this, that, while the heavens are out of the reach of man, the expression and result of forces which he cannot control, the earth is what man makes it. David's verse has in it the lofty description of the great philosophy of the universe that the source of all power is beyond man's reach, and that the place of man is just to furnish in his faithful and obedient life a medium through which the power that is in the heavens may descend and work upon the earth.

I. Here is the fundamental difference in the lives of men. Man finds the world in his hands. Everywhere the world is his. But everywhere the difference of man lies here, in whether this mastery seems to be absolute or whether it seems to be a trust. Absolute mastery means self-indulgence. The mastery of trust means humility, conscientiousness, elevation, charity, the fear of God and love of man.

II. It is in connection with this higher and true view of the giving of the world by God to man that the coming of Christ into the world gains its true meaning. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." The Giver came with clear assurance of Himself, making the men who saw Him know that it was He, touching the earth which was His own with a wise power that called out from it capacities which the poor tenant had never discovered, not taking it back out of man's keeping, but making Himself man, so that all men might see what it might really mean for man to keep, and use, and work the earth of God. So God came to His world.

III. What has all this to do with foreign missions? The fact which Christ comes to establish, the consciousness which He comes to renew, is one that belongs to all the earth. The desire to let the whole redeemed world know of its redemption moves in the heart of every man vividly conscious of the redemption in himself.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 173.

REFERENCES: cxv. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 160. cxvi. 1.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 240. cxvi. 3, 4, 8.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxi., No 1216. cxvi. 6.—G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 76.

Psalm cxvi., ver. 1.—"I love the Lord."

(1) THERE are multitudes who are utterly careless about God, in whose minds He exists as the object neither of one feeling nor another, who never think of Him so as either to love Him or be displeased with Him. (2) There are those who think much about God, but, instead of loving Him, are full of terror of Him. (3) There are not a few who, instead of loving God, *hate* Him, verily hate Him.

I. Notice some other species of love with the manifestations of which those of Divine love are liable to be confounded by the undiscriminating. (1) The saints' love of God has nothing in it of the nature of that affection of appetite by which so much of the love of earthly objects is characterised. (2) The love of God has nothing in it of the nature of that affection of instinct which is characteristic of the love of a mother for her infant child. (3) The saints' love of God has nothing in it of the nature of the love of compassion. (4) The saints' love of God is not of that character or degree which is produced by sensible intercourse.

II. In what does the saints' love of God positively consist?

(1) In its purest form, it consists in an admiration and esteem of His excellence—the love of moral approbation. All God's moral perfections make Him an object of love: (*a*) His justice; (*b*) His benevolence. (2) All love of God must commence at least with the love of gratitude, with loving Him because He has loved us, each one discerning for himself that God has been bountiful to him, is bountiful to him now, and will continue bountiful in all time to come. (*a*) Neither any consideration of God's bounty in creation nor any review of His bounty in providence will beget love for Him in the bosom of a man who is conscious of guilt, for the obvious reason that neither of these two works of nature contains any assurance for him of that which above all things else he needs: mercy, to pardon his iniquities. (*b*) No man can attain to the love of God who does not appropriate the tidings of the Gospel to himself.

W. ANDERSON, *Discourses*, p. 170.

Psalm cxvi., ver. 7.—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul."

THE rest of which the text speaks is the rest of a being who has found again his proper and congenial sphere. In reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ the soul regains its lost equilibrium, finds again the centre of repose for which it had been sighing in vain. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden," is the invitation of incarnate love; "and I will give you rest." And in the soul that yields to this invitation there rises the response of its deepest nature, the instinctive throb of a new yet natural affection, the calm sense of existence fulfilled and unexplained hope and desire solved in fruition—the witness in its own inmost consciousness that its true rest is found at last.

I. The rest of which the text speaks is not bodily or physical, but mental or spiritual, rest. (1) Bodily repose reaches not to the true centre of man's peace; but mental repose entrenches itself in the deepest region of man's nature, and renders him impregnable to outward assault. (2) Physical repose can only be periodic; the rest of the soul is essentially continuous

II. The rest of which the psalmist speaks may be described, again, as the rest not of immobility, but of equipoise. In the repose of a saintly spirit there is latent power. The inward repose which, sooner or later, true religion brings, is the result of the final conquest and subjugation of man's lower nature The peace of the holy mind is the peace not of stagnation but of self-conquest.

III. The true rest of the soul is that not of inactivity, but of congenial exertion. Labour is rest to the active and energetic spirit. The mind itself does not waste or grow weary; and but for the weight of the weapons wherewith it works, it might think, and imagine, and love on for ever. The service of God, beyond all other kinds of labour, may become the most perfect rest to the soul. As love to Christ deepens in the soul that is truly given to Him, the work which it prompts us to do for Him loses the feeling of effort and passes into pleasure.

IV. This rest is not absolute, but relative. Whilst it is a great thing to be an earnest worker in Christ's service, yet the Christian life is not mainly a life of action, but of trust, not of independent exertion, but of self-abandonment to the working of a mightier agency than ours. Calmly as the midnight voyager sleeps whilst, under watchful guidance, the vessel bears him onwards, so calmly, with such trustful humility, does the believer commit himself and his fates for time and eternity to the unslumbering providence of God.

V. This rest is attainable through Christ alone. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Him." He offers pardon to the guilty, purity to the defiled, peace, joy, hope, heaven, to the wretched, or that which includes them all: that strange, unearthly blessing *rest* to the weary and heavy-laden soul.

J CAIRD, *Sermons*, p. 192.

REFERENCES: cxvi. 7.—M. R. Vincent, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 215; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p 339. cxvi. 8.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 105. cxvi. 9.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 319.

Psalm cxvi., ver. 11.—"I said in my haste, All men are liars."

THE text reveals the psalmist as having passed through the shadow of that mood of mind to which we give the name of cynicism. The great danger is lest the mood should pass into a habit, lest we should nurse it until it becomes a chronic attitude of mind, and we begin to lose the taste of its bitterness and to take a morbid pleasure in indulging it. Notice one or two practical safeguards against the attitude or habit of cynicism.

I. Let us cherish a modest estimate of our own abilities and our own importance.

II. Let us cultivate the habit of looking out for human excellences, and of putting the most generous construction on human actions.

III. Let us seek to look at all men as through the eyes of Christ.

T. CAMPBELL-FINLAYSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 353.

REFERENCES: cxvi. 11.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 186. cxvi. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 910.

Psalm cxvi., vers. 12, 13.—"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

THE great thought which lies here is that we best requite God by thankfully taking what He gives.

I. Note how deep that thought goes into the heart of God. We requite God by taking rather than by giving, not merely because He needs nothing, and we have nothing which is not His. The motive of His giving to us is the deepest reason why our best recompense to Him is our thankful reception of His mercies. The principle of our text reposes at last on "God is love, and wishes our hearts," and not merely on "God has all, and does not need our gifts."

II. Look at the elements which make up this requital of God in which He delights. (1) Let us be sure that we recognise the real contents of our cup. It is a cup of salvation, however hard it is sometimes to believe it. (2) Be sure that you take what God gives. There can be no greater slight and dishonour to a giver than to have his gifts neglected. (3) One more element has still to be named: the thankful recognition of Him in all our feasting. "Call on the name of the Lord." Only he who enjoys life in God enjoys it worthily. Only he who enjoys life in God enjoys it at all.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 142.

Psalm cxvi., ver. 13.—"I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

I. WE see here, first, God giving. The form which the giving takes in this representation is the hand of God presenting a cup. Goodness is manifested in all God's giving, in the cup of wrath as in the cup of blessing; but the cup of blessing is a revelation of love, God giving. This is the ultimate Owner giving. This is giving on His part in whom the absolute right of possession is vested. This is righteous giving. This is giving which need not make us afraid of taking.

II. Man taking. The taking here is not a simple laying hold of that which God gives, but the use and enjoyment of what God bestows. To take the cup of salvation is to receive

a blessing in all its fulness, to the utmost limit of our receptive capacity and of our power to accept and to enjoy.

III. God's servant seeing God in what he takes. There is a name of God on every cup, and in every act of offering a cup.

IV. Worship, the fruit of what we receive and see. Past and present gifts on the part of God should encourage us in three things: prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 273.

REFERENCES: cxvi. 13.—S. H. Booth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 161; C. J. Vaughan, *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 273. cxvi. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1036; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ii., p. 278; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 30.

Psalm cxvi., ver. 16.—"I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid."

THERE is service in the very fact and nature of existence. A man whose heart, and mind, and soul are right with God, whose affections are really given to Him, whose intellect grasps Him, and whose inner spiritual life is united to Him—that man is truly a servant of God, and in so far does his proper part, though you may call it the mere "service of being."

I. We are right always according as we view anything as God views it. Now God, surveying all His vast creation, regards all things which He has made as created for this one end: to do Him homage and adoration. Even in irrational and in insensible creation there is the service of being. Man is sent to render the service of all the handiwork of God. What then if man himself do not serve God? Then the whole series is idle; then God's design is frustrated; then throughout the world the absence of man's service mars the whole system and design of universal being.

II. Every man is a temple. The body is its holy walls, the intellect or the feelings are the sacred interior of the edifice, the soul is the shrine, and the indwelling spirit is the consecrated presence. Let all these be simply there, in their harmony and proportion, and there is the service of being.

III. Service is something beyond and better than obedience. (1) It involves community; you cannot serve right without an identity of interest with the person you are serving. (2) Service is not compatible with divided allegiance. (3) Service must be of the whole man at once.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 34.

Psalm cxvi., ver. 16.—"O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid."

I. DAVID'S design here is to represent his piety as hereditary; and he mentions his mother because to her especially, in all probability, his religious convictions and impressions were instrumentally due. If this were the case, how much does the Church owe, under God, to the kindly wisdom of that godly mother, for it is the mother, after all, that has most to do with the making or the marring of the man.

II. David and Moses may be regarded as instances in which the good seed fell into good soil, and in which the return was speedy as well as rich. But it is not always so; usually, we may say, it is not so. For the most part the seed lies apparently dormant, the spring is long and unpromising, and the faith of the sower has to be exercised in a patient waiting for the promised growth. Nay, sometimes it seems as if all were lost, as if the seed had utterly perished, and as if the soil that had been so carefully cultured and watched over must be hopelessly given up to desolation or to rank and abominable weeds. But a mother's teachings have a marvellous vitality in them; there is a strange, living power in that good seed which is sown by a mother's hand in her child's heart in the early dawn of the child's being; and there is a deathless potency in a mother's prayers and tears for those whom she has borne, which only God can estimate.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 255.

REFERENCES: cxvi. 16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 42; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 312, and vol. xxix., No. 1740; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 5; *Good Words*, 1861, p. 190. cxvi. 18.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 38. cxvii. 1.—B. M. Palmer, *Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 143.

Psalm cxviii., ver. 6.—"What can man do unto me?"

THIS inquiry may be regarded:—

I. As a check on human presumption.

II. As a warning against impious distrust.

III. As a rebuke of moral timidity.

IV. As an argument against all false confidences.

PARKER, *Hidden Springs*, p. 272.

REFERENCES: cxviii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 67. cxviii. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 254. cxviii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 97.

Psalm cxviii., ver. 17.—"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

I. What did these words mean in the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ? Before His crucifixion the words were clearly a prophecy of the Resurrection. But after the Resurrection the words must have had a fuller and, if we may dare to say it, a more literal meaning; they became to Him more literally true. "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more"—this was their meaning; this is indeed the crowning glory of the Easter victory: it is final.

II. We listen here again to the heart of the Church of Christ, to an utterance that comes from it again and again during the centuries of its eventful history. In three ways the Church of Christ has been from time to time brought down to all appearance to the very chambers of the dead, and from this deep depression she has risen again to newness of life. (1) There have been the distress and suffering produced by outward persecution; (2) the decay of vital convictions within her fold; (3) moral corruption. Yet whatever might be the load of passing distress and discouragement, there has reigned all along the profound conviction that the faith and life of Christendom would not die out, that the Church still might say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

III. In these words we have the true language of the individual Christian soul whether in recovery from illness or face to face with death. The legend that the risen Lazarus was never seen to smile expresses the sense of mankind as to what becomes the man who has passed the threshold of the other world; and surely a new and peculiar seriousness is due from those who have had to pass it, and who have returned to life by what is little less than a resurrection. Like the risen Jesus, and in virtue of His resurrection power, such a life must "declare the works of the Lord."

H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 296 (see also *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 352; and *Easter Sermons*, vol. i., p. 134).

References: cxviii. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 268. cxviii. 19.—J. Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 99.

Psalm cxviii., vers. 22-24.—"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes," etc.

I. There can be no doubt that it is our Lord Jesus Christ

whom David here designates as "the stone which the builders refused." And when it has been ascertained that it is Christ whom David describes by the figure of a stone, there can be little debate that His resurrection placed Him at the head of the corner, for He rose from the dead as a Conqueror, though He went down to the grave like one vanquished by enemies; and henceforward there shall be "committed unto Him all power both in heaven and in earth."

II. The feelings of the psalmist were those of amazement and delight. (1) Never ought the resurrection of the Redeemer to appear to us other than a fact as amazing as it is consolatory, for there is a respect in which the resurrection of Christ differs immeasurably from every other recorded case of the quickening of the dead. Others were raised by Christ, or by men acting in the name and with the authority of Christ; but Christ raised Himself. The stone, rejected as it had been, and thrown by the builders into the pit, stirred of itself in its gloomy receptacle, instinct miraculously with life, forced back whatever opposed its return, and sprang to its due place in the temple of God. Verily we must exclaim, with the psalmist, "This is the Lord's doing." (2) But amazement or admiration is not the only feeling which the fact before us should excite. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (*a*) There was no day before; it was not day to an apostate and darkened creation till the Sun of righteousness rose on it in His strength; and His rising was virtually the rising from the dead. We, then, who can rejoice, because there has arisen a Mediator between us and God, must therefore rejoice in the exaltation of the rejected stone. It was in the rising to the head of the corner that this stone swept down the obstacles to the forgiveness of man, and opened to him the pathway to heaven and immortality. (*b*) The resurrection of our own bodies is intimately connected with the resurrection of Christ, connected as an effect with a cause, for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The resurrection of the body is a cause for joy.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1696.

REFERENCE: cxviii. 22-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1420.

Psalm cxviii., ver. 24.—"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

THIS Psalm has been applied by our Church to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is looked upon

as a triumphant hymn. All throughout are notes of thanksgiving; and all throughout are allusions to Christ, and to His victory, and the defeat of His enemies. It is full of the great tidings of a risen, conquering Lord; and these tidings are beyond all others of importance to man, the greatest, the gladdest, charged with most stupendous consequences.

I. If it belong to man to rejoice when some great captain has fought his country's enemies, and beaten them, and led their chiefs captives, how much more surely ought the Christian to be glad and rejoice on each recurrence of Easter. For it is the anniversary of the Lord's victory. He comes, leading the invader a prisoner, leading captivity captive. He comes to proclaim the victory.

II. The joy that a Christian feels to-day is a widespread joy; it is not only that the holy and innocent Jesus has shown Himself the Conqueror, but it is because the benefit of His victory reaches far and wide—reaches to all the race which He came to save. The enemy which Christ subdued is our enemy. The crown which He has won, the crown of life, is a crown that we too may hope to wear.

III. The resurrection of the dead is assured to us by what happened to-day. Sad and incessant are the inroads of Death, mighty in power, still a great severer of dear ties, a separator of chief friends; but his power is broken. Jesus has gone before us through the grave and gate of death; He speaks to us to-day from the other side of the flood: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 92.

What are the joys of Easter? Why on this day above all days should we rejoice and be glad?

I. Our first and highest joy to-day is undoubtedly that Jesus is happy—happy that His work is done; happy that His people's work is done in His.

II. The next joy is that those whom we have loved, and lost, and laid in their quiet graves will rise where He has risen. For as His grave hath opened, so hath theirs.

III. This is an Easter joy: your salvation is sure. Jesus and His atoning death have been accepted. "He is raised for your justification."

IV. If you are really a member in the mystical body of Christ, you were there when Christ rose; it is a risen life you

are leading. You may look upon old things as a risen man may look upon his graveclothes. You are free—free from bondage; free to walk; free to run; free to soar in your holy liberty.

V. No one will pass his Easter rightly who does not get up in heart and life a little higher than he was before. The characteristic feature of the season is rising. There is no joy on earth like a life going up, ascending in the Christian scale. Consecrate this Easter by some one distinct upward step, some rise in the being of your immortality.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 173.

WE Christians, though born in our very infancy into the kingdom of God and chosen above all other men to be heirs of heaven and witnesses to the world, and though knowing and believing this truth entirely, yet have very great difficulty, and pass many years, in learning our privilege. This insensibility or want of apprehension rises in great measure from our exceeding frailness and sinfulness. Yet besides this, there are certainly other reasons too which make it difficult for us to apprehend our state and cause us to do so but gradually, and which are not our fault, but which arise out of our position and circumstances.

I. We are born into the fulness of Christian blessings long before we have reason. As, then, we acquire reason itself but gradually, so we acquire the knowledge of what we are but gradually also. We are like people waking from sleep, who cannot collect their thoughts at once or understand where they are. By little and little the truth breaks upon us. Such are we in the present world, sons of light, gradually waking to a knowledge of themselves.

II. Our duties to God and man are not only duties done to them, but they are means of enlightening our eyes and making our faith apprehensive. Every act of obedience has a tendency to strengthen our convictions about heaven.

III. While we feel keenly, as we ought, that we do not honour this blessed day with that lively and earnest joy which is its due, yet let us not be discouraged, let us not despond, at this. We *do* feel joy; we feel more joy than we know we do. We see more of the next world than we know we see. As children say to themselves, "This is the spring," or "This is the sea," trying to grasp the thought and not let it go; as travellers in a foreign land say, "This is that great

city," or "This is that famous building," knowing it has a long history through centuries and vexed with themselves that they know so little about it, so let us say, "This is the day of days, the royal day, the Lord's Day. This is the day on which Christ arose from the dead, the day which brought us salvation." It brings us in figure through the grave and gate of death to our season of refreshment in Abraham's bosom.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 94.

REFERENCES: cxviii. 24.—J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 26; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 255; A. Rees, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 328; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. iii., p. 275; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 123; H. P. Liddon, *Easter Sermons*, vol. i., p. 226, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 145. cxviii. 27.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 86.

Psalm cxix., ver. 2.—"Blessed are they that . . . seek Him with their whole heart."

I. IT must be at once apparent that seeking God is a right thing—a thing fitting and becoming for man, as the creature and the child of God, to do. Whom or what should he seek if he seek not God? Is not God the Author of his being, the Supporter of his existence, the Source of all his advantages, the Giver of every good gift that he enjoys? It becomes us to seek Him that we may know Him in all the glory of His perfections and all the plenitude of His grace, to seek Him that we may bring our emptiness to His fulness, our poverty to His riches, our darkness to His light, that He may help us according to our need.

II. One reason why there is so little of earnest, hearty seeking after God on the part of His people is that we do not sufficiently keep before us the idea that this is what above everything else it is our duty and our privilege to do. There is so much said about men seeking pardon, and seeking peace, and seeking acceptance with God that we are apt to fall into a belief that these are in themselves the ultimate ends of our religion. But the Bible never represents them in that light, nor does it dwell upon them to such an extent as we are accustomed to do. It brings them forward as means to an end. Having found these inestimable blessings, we are not to rest there; there is something higher and better to which they are designed to lead us. In them we lay the foundation of the Divine life, but they are not that life itself. That life is in God, and it is only as we seek Him with our whole heart

that we can enjoy that life. To bring us to Himself is the crowning design of the Gospel scheme.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 50.

REFERENCES: cxix. 5.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 205. cxix. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1443.

Psalm cxix., ver. 9.—"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?"

I. THE Bible makes a great deal in its teaching about the ways of men. And nothing is plainer than that it contemplates as great a variety of ways as there are kinds of men. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse *his* way?" Not any way, not somebody else's way, not the old man's way, not the way of the man in mid-life, but his own way: the young man's way. Your way is a way of hope. Your face is towards the future. You have all the possibilities still before you. Every step, therefore, is solemn, is of everlasting importance, may be a step into blessedness or a step into woe.

II. Try, next, to understand what is meant by "cleansing the way." It is the cleanness which is part of God's life which is intended. God is of purer eyes than to look upon sin. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. It is the cleanness which is also the holiness of God—cleanness from sin, from evil, from guile, from insincerity. And the question, read in the light of this explanation, means, "Wherewithal shall a young man lead a holy life, like the life of the holy God? Wherewithal shall he make his way the way of a saint?"

III. The answer to this question is, "By taking heed thereto according to God's word:" by taking God's word as the light, the guide, and the director of the way; by considering your steps in the light of that word; by taking that word as the chart, the pilot, and the propeller of your way. (1) A great practical step has been taken when you see that you are to a certain extent God's stewards over your own life and character. (2) Another great step is taken when you see that there is a contrast between the light of God's word and the life on which it falls. (3) The next step places you face to face with the grand choice submitted to every soul who follows God's word: the choice between the life you are leading and the life which that light expresses.

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 229.

REFERENCES: cxix. 9.—A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 198; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 315; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 196; F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 519. cxix. 9-11.—H. Allon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 40. cxix. 9-12.—H. W. Beecher *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 90.

Psalm cxix., ver. 15.—"I will meditate in Thy precepts."

I. The Hebrew word here translated "meditate" signifies properly to speak or converse with one's self. Hence it conveys the idea of seclusion, retirement, solitude, and, at the same time, of mental activity. In meditation the mind retreats within itself; but it retreats thither to think, to ponder, to reflect. To meditate one must, therefore, first of all retire. To converse with self we must be alone, our sole companion our own thoughts, our sole witness God and nature.

II. But it is not enough that we be alone. Mere solitude is not meditation, and as little is mere quietude or mere musing. There are some minds that are given to a still, half-sleeping, half-waking passivity of thought, a habit which seems to be most seductive, but which is utterly unprofitable. Meditation involves the ideas of reflectiveness, of reverence. It is a fixing of the mind upon something interesting to ourselves and, at the same time, impressive. The man who meditates has his mind occupied by some lofty theme; especially in religious meditation the mind fixes upon God and the things of God.

III. It needs only that we should make the experiment to satisfy ourselves that the practice thus commended to us is intimately connected with our spiritual welfare and growth in holiness. (1) Meditation is that which rivets Divine truth in the memory. (2) Meditation on Divine things makes them really profitable to us. (3) Meditation gives depth, seriousness, and earnestness to our religious profession and character. Religion, whatever else it is, is a mode of thought; and hence it is only as deep and earnest thoughtfulness is bestowed upon it that it can be developed in its higher and nobler forms.

W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 1.

Reference: cxix. 15.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 286.

Psalm cxix., ver. 18.—"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

I. Consider the sense of wonder in man, and what generally excites it. That God has bestowed on man such a faculty we all know. It is one of the first and most constant emotions in our nature. The greatest minds and the truest hearts preserve this feeling fresh to the very last, and go through life finding new cause for intelligent wonder day after day. The feeling may be excited: (1) by the new or unexpected; (2) by the beautiful or grand; (3) by the mysterious which surrounds man.

II. God has made provision for this sense of wonder in His revealed word. (1) The Bible addresses our sense of wonder by constantly presenting the new and unexpected to us. (2) It sets before us also things beautiful and grand, without which the new would be a matter of idle curiosity. (3) If we come to the third source of wonder, that which raises it to *awe*, it is the peculiar province of the Bible to deal with this.

III. Notice the means we are to use in order to have God's word thus unfolded. The prayer of the Psalmist may be our guide, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see." (1) He asks for no new revelation. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. (2) He asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 29.

I. WE are all born spiritually blind. When man lost his innocence, he lost also his sight. Blindness is the effect of sin.

II. Consider some of the characteristics of this blindness. (1) Blindness deprives its subjects of many pleasures which God's goodness lavishes on us, and through our eyes pours into our hearts. (2) Blindness makes the condition of its subjects one of painful dependence. (3) Blindness exposes its subjects to deception. (4) Blindness exposes us to danger.

III. The eyes of the blind being opened, they behold wondrous things out of the law of God. Open a blind man's eyes. With what amazement, happiness, overflowing joy, will he gaze, nor tire gazing, on all above and around him, from the sun blazing in heaven to the tiniest flower that springs in beauty at his feet! And let God open a sinner's eyes, the Bible will seem to him a new book, and he seem to himself a new creature. He will see his heart, and wonder at its wickedness. He will see the Saviour, and wonder at His love. He will see how God has spared him, and wonder at His longsuffering. He will see salvation as the one thing needful, and wonder he could have taken a night's rest, ventured to close his eyes in sleep, till he had found peace with God.

IV. God only can open our eyes. We need sight as well as light. Abroad, among the Alps, where the road, leaving the gay and smiling valley, climbs into the realms of eternal winter, or is cut out of the face of precipices, down which one false step hurls the traveller into a gorge where the foaming torrent seems but a silver thread, tall crosses stand. And so, when the

path is buried in the drift that spreads a treacherous crust over yawning crevice and deadly crag, he, by keeping the line of crosses, braves the tempest, and walks safely where otherwise it were death to venture. But set a blind man on such a road, and he never reaches home; the earth his bed and the snow his shroud, he sleeps the sleep that knows no waking. Now there is a Cross that points out man's way to heaven; but unless the eyes that sin sealed are open—have been opened by God to see it, and all the way-marks that mercy has set up to that happy home—our feet shall "stumble upon the dark mountains," and we shall perish for ever.

T. GUTHRIE, *Speaking to the Heart*, p. 183.

Two forms of Divine teaching are implied in these words: revelation and spiritual apprehension to receive that which is revealed, truth in the written word and the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, the one therefore universal, common to all men—the open Bible, the Gospel preached to every creature under heaven—the other personal, private, incommunicable by man to man. And in this prayer both these are equally recognised as God's gift. "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

I. Notice, first, that the distinction which is here implied is in perfect harmony and analogy with all the conditions of human knowledge. Every branch of human knowledge has its objective and subjective side. In every art, every science, every pursuit, there are these two things: (1) general laws, rules, theories, principles, illustrations, examples, which can be committed to writing, stored up in books, taught in words by the teacher to the scholar; and (2) there is the personal aptitude, which may be developed by culture if it be latent, but which can never be bestowed when it is wanting.

II. The Bible amply recognises and abundantly teaches this double character of Divine knowledge, this analogy between Divine knowledge and every other kind of knowledge, but at the same time with a broad and vital difference. According to the teaching of the Bible, incapacity for spiritual truth is not the misfortune of individuals; it is the calamity of the human race: and, on the other hand, power to receive and apprehend spiritual truth is not the gift of genius, not the acquirement of plodding industry; it is the dark gift of God; it is the open eye, which God has opened to behold the great things out of His law.

III. It is an unspeakably consoling and delightful reflection that this impossibility of attaining spiritual truth apart from Divine teaching, which God's word so plainly sets forth, puts no hindrance in any man's way, no hindrance in the way of the simplest learner, no hindrance in the way of the unbeliever any more than of the believer, if only the unbeliever is desirous of knowing what is truth.

IV. This prayer implies the Divine inspiration and authority of the Bible; for is it not plainly incontrovertible that if the Bible be a book which the wisest man cannot understand, and therefore cannot interpret, without Divine teaching direct from God, it must be a book which no man could have written without such teaching?

E. R. CONDER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 280.

THE life of the soul has its wonders as well as the life of the body and the life of nature. It is a complex and mysterious thing. None but "opened eyes" can discern its marvellous treasures; and with *them* the further we see the greater is the wonder. God's discipline, God's patience, God's adjustment of men's powers and defects, God's method of answering prayer or seeming to be deaf to it—in these and similar dealings we can, if we will, find ever-fresh food for wonder, if only He grant us the gift of a teachable heart and an open eye.

I. Think of that phenomenon, so well known to all Christians, God's strength made perfect in weakness. Sometimes it is in spite of men's weakness; sometimes it is actually in consequence of it. The wonderful thing is to see how God's strength often takes hold of a weak character, and works upon it His miracles of purification. Where the worldly critic despairs, the instructed Christian hopes.

II. Consider another phenomenon in God's discipline: the use which He makes of disappointment. Is there no room for wonder here? To a very young boy disappointment is crushing and blinding. Everything and everybody seem set against him. But when growing years or a riper Christian experience has at last opened his eyes, he begins to discern "wondrous things" in the Divine law of disappointment. He sees, and others perhaps see still more plainly that that was the rock on which his character was built.

III. Notice another wondrous thing of God's law: His permission of sin. Sin is overruled into a trainer of righteousness. There are few more wondrous things in the moral world

than to trace how a good man has been trained by his own sins, or rather trained by the Holy Spirit of God through the permitted instrumentality of his own personal sins.

IV. Once more, if we look at the method by which God works His plans of improvement, may we not find abundant cause for reverent wonder? Think of His patience; His choice of feeble instruments; His choice, too, of unexpected and, as we should have thought, inappropriate means to work out His own ends; His discouragement sometimes of the higher agencies, and apparent preference for the lower. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 169.

THE man who uttered these words felt that he was under Divine law. He felt that he knew it badly, and that it deeply concerned him to know it well; that to realise its sublimity and comprehensiveness, its marvellous wisdom, its perfect righteousness, would be light, and strength, and life to his soul, but that so to realise it God must vouchsafe to him a sacred influence, a spiritual enlightenment, and, he adds, sufficient faith in his God to believe that He was able and willing thus to help him.

I. There are assuredly countless wonders to be beheld in God's law, and we need only open eyes to behold them. In the Bible and other books we have the statements of God's laws; but these laws themselves are far too real to be in any book. No law of God, natural or spiritual, can be shut up in a book.

II. While all the laws of God should, as far as possible, be objects of interest and admiration, yet these laws are not all of the same practical importance to us. There are many of them which we must all be ignorant of, and which we may safely be ignorant of; there are many of them which we might know had we only time to make ourselves acquainted with them, yet we cannot consistently with duty spare the time necessary to understand them. On the other hand, there is a class of laws of awful significance to us, of which we must on no account be ignorant. Clearly it was these laws, which he also describes as the commandments, and precepts, and statutes of God, His righteous judgments, and His testimonies, that the Psalmist prayed to behold.

III. It is not enough to have God's law before us, or His truth disclosed; but we need also to have our eyes opened to

see the law, our minds helped to understand the truth. The reason of man can no more act independently of God than his will can. Just as the will has been made to find its life in the holiness of God, reason has been made to find its life in the wisdom of God. Unless God open our eyes to behold the wonders of His law, no clearness in the outward revelation of its wonders will give us a true view of it. We shall see and yet not perceive.

R. FLINT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 8.

REFERENCES: cxix. 18.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 77; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 312; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 59.

Psalm cxix., ver. 19.—"I am a stranger on the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me."

I. THE stranger. The literal stranger is easily recognised, not so easily, perhaps, in a great city, where there are always thousands of strangers and foreigners, but easily in country towns and villages and on country roads. The life-spelling of the word "onward" sits in his look. His home, wherever it may be, is not here. There is one word which, as it seems to me, expresses more than any other single word of the real meaning of the principal term of this verse: "stranger"—the word "reserve." A principle, an instinct, a habit, of reserve will be found running through the whole of life on the earthly side of it with the stranger, as, for instance, (1) reserve in secular occupations, in what we call the business of life; (2) reserve in pleasure; (3) reserve even in the sphere of highest duty. The stranger is one who holds himself in reserve, who lifts himself up, who looks far and high, who directs his being inwards.

II. The prayer is perfectly suited to the condition which has been described. "A stranger"—here but for a little, and yet morally beginning the great hereafter, "never continuing in one stay," and yet possessing one being, and developing and settling that being into character. God's commandments, revealed and brought home to the heart, will yield plentifully all that can be needed in the pilgrim state. In one way or other they touch all the chances and hazards of the journey and all the requirements of the traveller, while they all combine to make one supreme influence of preparation for what will come when the earthly journey is over.

A. RALEIGH, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 313.

I. MAN'S solitude: "I am a stranger upon earth."
II. Man's true companionship: "Thy commandments."
III. Man's true source of power: "Hide not"—teach me—"Thy commandments."

BISHOP KING, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 243.

I. I AM as a stranger in the earth because of the impermanence of my position.

II. I am as a stranger in the earth because of my life and language.

III. I am as a stranger in the earth because of the perils to which I am exposed.

IV. "Hide not Thy commandments from me." These words show that God has not been unmindful of the earthly life of His saints, but has provided for its effectual protection.

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 601.

Psalm cxix., vers. 19, 54.—"I am a stranger on the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

TAKEN together, these words set forth our condition as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and God's bountiful provision for meeting that condition in Christ.

I. The fact that we are strangers is forced upon us by our ignorance. Apart from revelation, we know almost nothing of the world we live in, and absolutely nothing of its Lord. In every age and to every thinking soul arise the great questions, Who sent me into this earth? Why am I here? Whither am I going? A yearning for replies to these questions springs up in every heart. "O unknown Maker, I am a stranger on the earth; hide not Thy laws from me." The Gospel is God's answer to this cry. It is the revelation of the light which is behind sun and stars. Christ puts that great word "Father" into all our thoughts. He lifts the light of it over the whole universe. And the knowledge and glory of a living, loving, personal Father stream in upon us from every side.

II. Our sins still more than our ignorance have put the sense of strangeness into our hearts and the marks of it upon our countenance. When the soul awakens to spiritual consciousness and finds itself in the presence of this great truth of the Fatherhood of God, the first fact which confronts it is a sense of farness from the Father. It is God's mercy that He has not left us to rest in this depth of strangeness. He has

made a way for us in Christ—the new and living way by the blood. God's own Son has died to put our estrangement away. "We are no more strangers and foreigners." The blood has brought us near.

III. Another proof that we are strangers is the estrangement we find among men. Of this problem also the solution is provided in the Gospel. Christ comes as the great Uniter and Binder together. He comes sowing over all the waste of estrangement and alienation this healing word: "One is your Father." He comes with the grand purpose of binding those who receive that word into a holy and abiding fellowship.

IV. The last and saddest mark of the stranger upon us is death. If there had been no light for this shadow, how great our misery should be. But, blessed be God, He has not hidden the future from His child. This also is laid bare to our hungering hearts in Christ. A home awaits us beyond the grave. A new life blooms for us in the very presence of God. Our torn and suffering earthly existence is to be crowned with glory and immortality in the world of the risen dead. Christ the Resurrection! Christ the Life!—that is our song in the home on which the shadows have begun to fall.

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 291.

REFERENCES: cxix. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1586. cxix. 24.—J. R. Macduff, *Good Words*, 1861, p. 525.

Psalm cxix., ver. 25.—"My soul cleaveth unto the dust."

THESE words express, with great intensity of humiliation, a consciousness which is universal among all sincere Christians—I mean, the power of the world and of the body over the soul. Our slowness and sluggishness in spiritual obedience is a special proof of the power of the Fall still abiding upon us, and of our proneness to linger and hold fast by earth and its attractions.

I. One cause of this disheartening feeling is that people aim at models and examples which are too high for them. There is one *example* for all: the life of Christ; one *tendency* wholly unlimited in the direction of which all must press towards His example; but the standard—that is, the manner and measure in which we are permitted to advance in that tendency—is of God. He proportions it by His providence and His grace. All that we can do, the holiest thing we can do, is to apply and mould ourselves entirely upon the lot He has meted out to us.

II. But perhaps it may be said, "This is not my distress.

I have no desire to go out of my lot into disproportioned habits; but I do not comply with this tendency of which you speak. This is the point where I cleave to the dust. I make no advance in the spiritual life." In answer it may be said that we are too hasty in looking for signs of advancement. We cannot too much desire to become sinless; but whatever may be our desire, patience is our duty. God has a seedtime, and a burial, sometimes long and strange, of the germs of spiritual life, before the feast of ingathering is fully come. We must not look out for the harvest when we have only cast the seed, nor for the vintage when we have but yesterday bound up the vines. Growth in grace is slow, because it is to be attained by the progressive and persevering action of our moral nature, under the conditions of the Fall, and against the antagonist powers of temptation.

III. But perhaps it may be said again, "This would be all very well if I were not conscious of positive faults, and sometimes even of falling back into those of which I have repented. Positive evils are alive within me, and I often see them even more active than before." Speaking still to sincere minds, it may be said that we are no sure judges of this matter. A growing consciousness of sin is no certain sign of growing sinfulness, but, on the contrary, a probable sign of growing sanctification. The same will which, in wisdom, has ordained the law of slow growth for our spiritual life, has also, in love, ordained a slow perception of our sinfulness. The surest remedy for such complaints will be found in practical rules. (1) The first is to reduce our self-examination to definite points. (2) Having reduced our self-examination to definite points, let us from the sins we have so detected choose out some one against which to direct our chief watchfulness and strength.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 134.

Psalm cxix., ver. 25.—"My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me according to Thy word."

I. THE character of David, the son of Jesse, the king and sweet Psalmist of Israel, is one in which so many common points of our own characters meet, that it would be very difficult for us to lay hold of one thread of the loom and to draw it out from the others and study it separately. One leading idea runs through his whole life. David's is the character of a man who had intense human affections, tending even towards sensuous appetite, while to a strong degree he possessed a

sense of all the higher aspirations of our nature. There are no stronger cables that bind down our tabernacle to the soil of this world than these two: strong affections and high ambition. A character with such conflicting elements, if it is to reach the desired haven under the guidance of God, must have very peculiar discipline and trials all its own.

II. It is remarkable to see the peculiar way in which Joab's influence over David was calculated to chasten and to keep in check the infirmities of the servant of God. Instances: the death of Abner; the affair of Uriah; the rebellion of Absalom.

III. We cannot but be struck with the almost necessity that there is that certain characters, if they are ever to be perfectly purified, should be placed in the same crucible of affliction. In a character like that of David, the grace of humility would have been left a plucked and withered flower far back on the path of life had it not been for the continual presence of Joab, whose hand, as it were, nurtured, though unconsciously, the lowly plant. We soon forget ourselves; we cannot help it. No voice more often with syren softness decoys us from the path of rectitude and lowliness of mind than that of a strong consciousness of personal influence over those around us; and where this is exercised for good, and not for evil, it is the more dangerous.

IV. It is necessary for the Church as well as for the individual that the faults of good men should be known. There is in man, and ever has been, a tendency to extol unduly, to elevate beyond their due place, the attainments of the saints of God. The faults of the good seem permitted to float on the surface that the holy may not overrate their fellow-man, nor the saint lose his balance and equipoise by the undue admiration of his fellow.

E. Monro, *Practical Sermons on the Characters of the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 39.

I. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." There is nothing to guide us in determining what were the circumstances of the man who said this, not the least need to inquire what they may have been. The words fit all circumstances. They carry us out of the region of circumstances. In any condition a man may cry, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust. There is a great weight upon me. You tell me I should exert myself to shake off the sloth, the despondency, which is preying upon me. But sloth and despondency are not raindrops that hang about my

clothes; they are not even the clothes themselves; they have got hold of myself; they appear to be parts of my nature." The king who is after God's own heart must learn by some discipline or other that he has a soul which—by very slight causes indeed, by some sickness of body, something less than that: a trivial disappointment or the mere satiety of success—may be brought down to the dust, may cleave to it, may be utterly unable to lift itself up.

II. From this confession when it is really one, when it rises as a sigh out of the deeps, there comes the prayer, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word." Then it is that man begins to believe in God, for then he begins to believe that he himself is not God. This sentence seems to contain the very essence of prayer, to be the explanation of all prayer, the necessity for it lying in a man's discovery of his weakness, the hope of it lying in the nature of God Himself and in His relation to man.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 259.

I. IT is not a strange experience for believers to be in this depressed condition: the soul cleaving to the dust. Sometimes there may be physical causes connected with a man's state of health, and sometimes other providences of God are concerned in producing this state of things; but it is a stage in a man's spiritual history. Generally it is connected with indwelling sin. More particularly it arises in connection with the failure of faith on the part of believers. Looking at it from the side of God's providence, it is permitted by God just as a step in the believer's history, because it is necessary that the believer's history should include an enlarged acquaintance with himself, with his own insufficiency, with his own tendency to unbelief, and darkness, and sin.

II. It is not characteristic of a believer to be contented in this condition. How can any one who believes in the reality and presence of a living God be content with a feeling of this deadness and depression, this awful contrast to the life and glory of that life-giving God? More than that, the believer has faith in the presence and power of a life-giving Christ. He has faith also in the life-giving Spirit, and in the mission and work of the Holy Ghost in its power, and gentleness, and love. How can a man who believes this be content to go on with his soul cleaving to the dust? Therefore he casts himself on God in prayer, and you find him declaring to God

the condition in which he is: "My soul cleaveth to the dust," and applying to God to meet this case of his: "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word."

III. There is a sure refuge for the believer with reference to this case of his. There is life for those who feel in themselves so much that looks like death. "Quicken Thou me"—give me life; cause me to live—"according to Thy word." This cry is not merely a cry of distress. He has the word which he can plead made known to him. It is a sure refuge and resource.

Application: (1) There is great reason for hopefulness in the condition of believers even when their souls cleave unto the dust. (2) There is great reason for earnestness. (3) There is a sure reward for those that seek the Lord.

R. RAINY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 237.

REFERENCES: cxix. 25.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 308; C. J. Vaughan, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 141. cxix. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1344.

Psalm cxix., ver. 31 (Prayer-book version).—**"I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, confound me not."**

IT is difficult to tell men what being confounded means, difficult and almost needless, for there are those who know what it means without being told, and those who do not know what it means without being told are not likely to know by any man's telling.

I. The Psalmist who wrote Psalm cxix. was a man, on his own showing, intensely open to the feeling of shame, and felt intensely what men said of him, felt intensely slander and insult. Isaiah was such a man; Jeremiah was such a man; Ezekiel was such a man: their writings show that they felt intensely the rebukes and the contempt which they had to endure from those whom they tried to warn and save. St. Paul, as may be seen from his own Epistles, was such a man, a man who was intensely sensitive of what men thought and said of him, yearning after the love and approbation of his fellow-men, and above all of his fellow-countrymen, his own flesh and blood. Of all men the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of man, had that feeling, that longing for the love and appreciation of men, and above all for the love and appreciation of His countrymen after the flesh, the Jews. He had, strange as it may seem—yet there it is in the Gospels, written for ever and undeniable—that capacity of shame which is the mark of true nobleness of soul.

If He had not felt the shame, what merit in despising it? It was His glory that He felt the shame and yet conquered the shame and crushed it down by the might of His love for fallen man.

II. Our Lord and Saviour stooped to be confounded for a moment that we might not be confounded to all eternity. As He did, so must we try to do. Every man who makes up his mind to do right and to be good must expect ridicule now and then. And the more tender your heart, the more you wish for the love and approbation of your fellow-men, the more of noble and modest self-distrust there is in you, the more painful will that be to you. The fear of man brings a snare, and nothing can deliver you out of that snare save the opposite fear: the fear of God, which is the same as trust in God.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 71.

Psalm cxix., ver. 32.—"I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."

THERE are two things especially remarkable in this Psalm: the variety of expressions used to describe the word of God and the corresponding variety of expressions used to describe the Son of man. In the text the Psalmist considers sin as a state of captivity and confinement.

I. The words express a consciousness of actual captivity. There is a stress laid on the words "Thy commandments." The Psalmist recognised their goodness and excellence, and desired to follow them; but he was at the same time conscious of an opposing force, of a constraint exercised on him from which he was unable to get free, and which not only prevented his going in the way of God's commandments, but compelled him to go in another way, and perhaps a totally contrary one. There is hope in such a state. There is hope for those who see God and God's word to be good, and wish, however faintly, that they could walk by it. When a soul once begins to sigh for freedom, it will not probably be very long before it is free; for that very sigh is itself the beginning of spiritual liberty.

II. The words express the consciousness of confinement and of narrowness of affection and desire after God. Thus considered, they belong to a higher religious state than the one just described. The Psalmist was conscious that his heart was narrow. He craved for more freedom of faith, for larger desires after God, for fuller trust in Him, and for warmer and stronger love towards Him. There are few Christians who will

not have the same feeling, and will not be conscious how small and low is their state of grace, how poor their service to their God, compared to what it should be, and what it might be with God to help them. Here, again, our hope is in God. He can enlarge our hearts by more perfectly revealing Himself within them. He enters into the soul, and the soul grows with His presence. His glory, and greatness, and beauty snap the restraining bands, and stretch the heart in which He dwells till it becomes capable of peace and joy unknown before.

E. GARBETT, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 213.

I. IT is evident that we may "go" in the way of commandments and not "run." There is the slow creeping of a mere abstract sense of stern duty. There is the slow walk of simple conscientiousness. There is the slavish course propelled by fear. There is the capricious step, half feeling, half principle, which is continually halting. But all this is not to run. To run is a joyous thing, and shows that the affections and the heart are drawn to it. To run is free, and tells a mind unbound. To run is quick and constant progress; and the attainments are clear, and distinct, and large. To run is a light and easy motion, and marks facility. To run makes the goal of hope near, and gives the confidence of success.

II. "Largeness of heart" is a pure gift of God. Still in this, as in everything, while all is of God's grace, the grace itself lies within man's responsibility. Notice one or two methods for "the enlargement of the heart." (1) The Bible is a very expanding book to man's intellect and to man's affections. (2) Meditation on the character, and the work, and the being of God is very "enlarging" to the character of man. (3) To embrace many in our love is a great secret of enlargement of spirit. (4) Acts of open-handed charity have a strange effect to increase the heart. (5) This growth of the heart is not by sudden impulses, but by gradual increments. (6) The most enlarging thing of all is the sense of pardon; the peace of forgiveness; the feeling, "I am loved."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 95.

I. WE have here a condition before we can attain that joyous spirit expressed in those words, "I will run the way of Thy commandments:" to turn from sin first of all. Many a man on looking back at his life says, "I will be devout; I will break with old associations; I will run the way of God's commandments,

I will be another and better man." How about the past? How about that fortress left in the enemy's country? How about the sin? Have you dealt with that? Deal with the past before you deal with the future.

II. Repentance is a habit of mind which is continued in our life in order that we may be like-minded with God, in order that we may look on our sins in the same mind that God looks upon them. God hates sin, though He loves the penitent. We must do that; we must hate sin and remember our sin with the same sort of shame which makes us like-minded with God.

III. And then, as the Revised Version puts it, we require liberty—liberty from ignorance which prevents us from receiving the mind of God. That is the liberty which we all desire. We must enlarge our capacity for receiving large things from God. When we have fulfilled this condition and have been set free from the bondage of sin, how blessed, and happy, and joyous is the career before us. The resources of God are simply inexhaustible; the resources of the Christian life are the same.

C. W. FURSE, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 188.

REFERENCES: cxix. 32.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 141; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 71; J. Keble, *Sermons for the Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 417.

Psalm cxix., vers. 33, 34.—"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

THERE were two thoughts in the Psalmist's mind:—

I. That there was something in the world which he must learn and would learn, for everything in this life and the next depended on his learning it. And this thing which he wants to learn he calls God's statutes, God's law, God's testimonies, God's commandments, God's everlasting judgments. That is what he feels he must learn, or else come to utter grief, both body and soul.

II. That if he is to learn them, God Himself must teach them to him. The Psalmist held that a man could see nothing unless God showed it to him. He held that a man could learn nothing unless God taught him, and taught him, moreover, in two ways: first taught him what he ought to do, and then taught him how to do it.

III. We must learn: (1) God's law. The moment you do wrong you put yourself under the Law, and the Law will punish you. Therefore your only chance for safety in this life and for ever is to learn God's laws and statutes about your life, that

you may pass through it justly, honourably, virtuously, successfully. (2) God's commandments. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (3) God's testimonies; what He has witnessed and declared about Himself and His own character: His power and His goodness, His severity and His love. (4) God's judgments; the way in which He rewards and punishes men. The Bible is full of accounts of the just and merciful judgments of God.

IV. God has not only commanded us to learn; He has promised to teach. He who wrote the hundred and nineteenth Psalm knew that well, and therefore his psalm is a prayer for teaching and a prayer for light.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 120.

Psalm cxix., vers. 33, 94 (Prayer-book version).—"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes: and I shall keep it to the end. I am Thine, O save me: for I have sought Thy commandments."

I. THERE are too many people in the world who pray to God to help them when they are in difficulties, or in danger, or in fear of death and of hell, but never pray at any other time or for any other thing. They pray to be helped out of what is disagreeable, but they never pray to be made good. The only men who can have any hope of their prayers being heard are those who, like the Psalmist, are trying to do something for Christ, and their neighbours, and the human race; who are, in a word, trying to be good. Those who have already prayed earnestly and often the first prayer—"Teach me, O Lord, Thy statutes; and I shall keep them to the end"—they have not a right, but a hope, through Christ's most precious and undeserved promises, that their prayers will be heard, and that Christ will save them from destruction, because they are at least likely to become worth saving, because they are likely to be of use in Christ's world and to do some little work in Christ's kingdom.

II. To all such, who long for light that by the light they may see to live the life, God answers, through His only-begotten Son, the Word, who endureth for ever in heaven, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If you wish to have reasonable hope when you have to pray, "Lord, save me," pray first, and pray continually, "Teach me, O Lord, Thy statutes; and I shall keep them to the end." C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 130.

REFERENCES: cxix. 37.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1072; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 20.

Psalm cxix., ver. 38.—"Stablish Thy word unto Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear."

THERE is a saying of Clough to which I take exception, and I quote it because it may represent the conclusion of more minds than the writer's: "The belief that religion is, or in any way requires, devotionality, is, if not the most noxious, at least the most obstinate, form of irreligion."

I. The question arises, What is meant by devotionality? We should most of us be disposed to say, A devotional spirit and tone of mind. But surely a devotional spirit is not only appropriate and in accordance with the fitness of things, but also the highest in quality of our various emotions. The only emotion which is appropriate, rational, I may say natural, when the mighty Presence of whom are all things is revealed, is awe. When that Presence is brought still nearer to us in a saving form, and through Christ we find a loving, pardoning heavenly Father, the only emotion possible is adoring, confiding reverence. Is this devotionality? Then a man who is incapable of it is less than a boor; he is a clod: to quote a verse of the same writer,—

"Neither man's aristocracy this, nor God's, God knoweth."

II. But it is possible that by devotionality may be meant the neglect of practical life for absorption in Divine contemplation. Now that this is to be condemned is evident. For he who neglects his worldly duties is as imperfect and one-sided as he who does not respond to his heavenly environment. But is there much danger of our leading a life of absorption in religion? The danger which most of us feel is that of absorption in the world and destitution in religion. I know you are not afraid of becoming too prayerful. There is no need to guard you against an encroaching devotionality.

III. It is clear that the devotional temper is necessary to all who can perceive greatness. Everything is liable to disease. But a healthy body is not to be despised because you may poison it. And just so it is with true devotion. It has its rare moments of intuition, of spiritual delight; but these moments shed a refreshing dew on all the life,—

"And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy."

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Liberalism in Religion*, p. 163.

SOME more than others, but all less or more, may pray for the confirmation of God's word in respect to its truth, its preciousness, and its power.

I. In respect to its truth. Are there any serious intellectual doubts about the word of God? (1) The book itself should be read. (2) There are doubts and irresolute conditions of mind which can only be exchanged for faith and fixedness by the instrumentality of work—honest, earnest work for God. (3) There are some doubts which will yield only to prayer.

II. In respect to its preciousness. The Gospel is exceedingly precious. When first consciously received, it is accepted with thankfulness and joy. The first love is fed by fresh discoveries, by wondering thought, by rapid acts of faith, by grateful memories, by new-born hopes; these all make fuel for that holy flame. Alas that it should change, and cool, and wane, and darken! Reproachfully one day there comes a voice through the chill, through the dark, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." If you have lost anything, then take instant means to have the loss repaired. Get a baptism of repentance to cleanse your soul afresh. Pray back the dews of your youth. Pray, as with your face to the east, until morning lights quiver up the sky. For those lights will come as you pray. While you are yet speaking "the dews will gather." God will "stablish His word unto His servant, who is devoted to His fear."

III. In respect to its practical power. If there be one point in human experience more dangerous than another, it is exactly the point between faith and practice, between inward love and outward work. Let us pray God to "stablish His word" to us in this respect also, to make religion to us more than clear intellectual faith, more even than heart-joy. Let us ask Him to make it the supreme and practically regulative force of our whole life, calm, steady, onwards, guiding and ruling us from duty to duty and from day to day.

A RALEIGH, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 135.

REFERENCE: cxix. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1524.

Psalm cxix., ver. 45.—"I will walk at liberty."

I. AT liberty! The very word has music in it. How full of suggestion of all that is bright and cheerful. To the captive Apostle it speaks of the bursting of chains, the angel deliverer, the restoration to friends, the recovered power of proclaiming to the people the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ; to the nation roused at last to make a vigorous effort and throw off the long-worn fetters of despotism and superstition it speaks of the power to lift the head once more in conscious majesty to

heaven, and to feel that now at length a noble future may be connected with a glorious past. To such the very word seems dearer than life itself, the only thing almost for which life is valuable, the one single atmosphere in which the breath of life can be inhaled with pleasure. And yet what advantageth freedom if we know not how to use it? The true use of freedom requires in every case, either for the individual or for the nation, moderation, thoughtfulness, self-restraint, respect for the feelings of others, definite conceptions of duty, and a deep and adequate sense of responsibility. Without these liberty is simply suicidal; with them, and just in proportion to the firmness of its hold on these principles, it grows ever more and more unto perfection.

II. Man's liberty is twofold. There is a liberty from without: freedom from all outward check or control; and there is a liberty also from within. This is the liberty without which all other liberty is valueless. Thought, speech, and action may all be free; but if the soul itself be not free also, we shall still, whatever we may be in name, be but slaves in deed and truth. The text ascends with us to this higher thought: "I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts." This is the very keynote to the music of heaven, God's will acting upon our will, the Spirit of Christ subduing and assimilating our spirit to itself; this alone is true liberty; this is taking captivity captive, and bursting the bonds of the soul in sunder. Such service is indeed perfect freedom.

T. H. STEEL, *Sermons in Harrow Chapel*, p. 329.

Psalm cxix., ver. 46.—"I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."

A SILENT religion or a speaking religion—which shall it be? David says, "I will speak." What do we say? Too often we resolve that we will keep silence.

I. I hold that the difference between a silent religion and a speaking religion is the difference between a dead Church and a living one. Living men must speak. Earnestness cannot be dumb; if it pause for a moment, it is but the pause of a gathering stream, which deepens that it may flow with a stronger rapidity. Silence may be ruin. The neglect of an opportunity of speaking the right word may not only imperil, but absolutely destroy, the destiny of a soul.

II. The theme on which David says he will speak is God's testimonies. Has he chosen a barren topic? Look at the

range, the explicitness, and the emphasis of these testimonies, and you will say that never did man choose so fruitful, so abounding, a theme. If there is one lesson clearer than another, it is that we are left without excuse if we fail to speak of the Divine testimonies. Opportunities occur every day. Circumstances arise under which no words can be so beautiful, so touching, so pithy, so real.

III. David says he will speak of the Divine testimonies before kings. We commit a serious error in not speaking to our equals, especially to those round about us. The testimonies of God are for every day in the week. There is something very marvellous, yet not altogether inexplicable, about human shame in relation to the Divine testimonies. In our day Gospel and sect have become synonymous terms. But let me remind you that if the believer will not speak of the Divine testimony, the unbeliever will! If there is silence in the Church, there is no silence in the camp of the enemy.

PARKER, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 87.

Psalm cxix., ver. 47.—"I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved."

THE love of God's laws is to be distinguished from the mere outward observance of them. As in the law of Moses, so far more in the Gospel of Christ, religion is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, consisting not in the mere observance of certain rules, however good, but in the love and delight we have in observing them, as being the gracious means appointed by our heavenly Father and Redeemer to bring us to His eternal rest.

I. Looking, then, impartially into our course of life and conduct, we ought to observe whether or not it is a sincere delight and consolation to us to meditate on what our heavenly Father and Redeemer has done for us, and to hold communion with Him in prayer, thanksgiving, and continual aspirations after His eternal rest.

II. In the same manner we should examine ourselves as to our conduct towards each other: whether that is founded on the high Christian principle of love for, and delight in, our Redeemer's will, or upon some other mean, unworthy grounds.

III. If we seriously wish to follow the way which leadeth unto life, we are bound to examine ourselves as to our self-command and power over our temper and disposition. Suppose we are called on in the way of daily duty to do or to suffer

things which are naturally vexatious, irksome, and unpleasant to us. In proportion as we love our God and Saviour, we shall delight even in such trials, simply for this reason: because they are sent us by Him. If we make it our business through life to love and delight in the commands of our Redeemer, we shall not fail at last, through the atonement of His blood, to be admitted to obtain His heavenly promises, His kingdom of eternal glory.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 215.

REFERENCES: cxix. 49.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 119. cxix. 50.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 163; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1872. cxix. 53.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 309.

Psalm cxix., ver. 54.—"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

THE doctrine of the Psalmist, removing the poetry of the form, is this: that obligation to God is our privilege.

I. Consider how it would be with us if we existed under no terms of obligation. (1) There could be no such thing as criminal law for the defence of property, reputation, and life, because the moral distinctions on which criminal law is grounded would be all wanting. (2) What we call society, as far as there is any element of dignity or blessing in it, depends on these moral obligations. Without these it would be intercourse without friendship, truth, charity, or mercy. All that is warm, and trustful, and dear in society rests in the keeping of these moral bonds.

II. Consider, as regards the spiritual nature, how much there is depending on this great privilege of obligation to God. (1) This claim of God's authority, this bond of duty laid upon us, is virtually the throne of God erected in the soul. When violated, it will scorch the bosom with pangs of remorse that are the most fiery and implacable of all mental sufferings. But of this there is no need; all such pains are avoidable by due obedience. And then obligation to God becomes the spring instead of the most dignified, fullest, healthiest joys anywhere attainable. The self-approving consciousness, the consciousness of good—what can raise one to a loftier pitch of confidence and blessing? (2) Consider the truly fraternal relation between our obligations to God and what we call our liberty. Instead of restraining our liberty, they only show us, in fact, how to use our liberty, and how to air it, in great and heroic actions.

(3) Obligation to God also imparts zest to life by giving to our actions a higher import, and, when they are right, a more consciously elevated spirit. The most serene, the most truly Godlike, enjoyment open to man, is that which he receives in the testimony that he pleases God and the moral self-approbation of his own mind. (4) It is also a great fact, as regards a due impression of obligation to God and of what is conferred in it, that it raises and tones the spiritual emotions of obedient souls into a key of sublimity which is the completeness of their joy. "For ye are complete in Him," says the Apostle, well knowing that it is not what we are in ourselves that makes our completeness, but that our measure of being is full only when we come unto God as an object and unite ourselves to the good and great emotions of God. Before Him all the deep and powerful emotions that lie in the vicinity of fear are waked into life; every chord of feeling is pitched to its highest key or capacity; and the soul quivers eternally in the sacred awe of God and His commandments, thrilled as by the sound of many waters or the roll of some anthem that stirs the framework of the worlds.

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 194.

NOTICE the striking combination here of one's identity, one's house, and one's pilgrimage. The great Father's children are not flesh and blood, but for a little while are "partakers of flesh and blood." The songs which are given to cheer us on our journey are not the songs of our flesh nor the songs of the world, but our songs in the flesh. They are the songs of our identity and our home, which accompany us in our pilgrimage through the world.

I. When we meet together as spirits on pilgrimage, song comes in because God comes in. We sing because we are not citizens of the world, but simply pilgrims passing through it. Love hath eternity, and eternity sings in our hearts because we are from eternity and on our way back.

II. Statutes are things that stand, things that have always stood, and will stand to eternity. These certainties of God are the sources whence comes the inspiration of all true songs. Find and enter the sphere where the eternal realities and eternal laws have their scope, and you are in the home of everlasting song. We must strongly rebuke the idea which would ascribe the songs of the soul to enthusiasm or mere impulse. It is law that sings. There is a shallow mirth of the

flesh, as there is a momentary blaze from a sky-rocket; but the stars, which shine for ever and ever, are set in the eternal order of musical law.

III. If you would be lifted above the dull level and routine of mortal life, if you would silence your self-reproach and annihilate the canker of discontent, ask the statutes of God to sing your soul into order. Jesus embodies them, and by leading them into you, by establishing them in the centre of your soul, will lead you in the "way everlasting." The sweetest, the loftiest, and most soul-thrilling music of the world is an inspiration from the ascended Man. He is pulsing the harmony of His own nature through the race.

IV. If the eternal statutes sing within us in this strange land, with what songs may we expect to be greeted as we approach the gates of our true home! The way, in Christ, leads thither, and can end nowhere else. "Where I am, there ye shall be also."

V. Notice the inseverability of God and man, suggested by the "Thy" and the "my" of the text. "*Thy* statutes are *my* songs."

J. PULSFORD, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 254.

REFERENCES: cxix. 54.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 27; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1652; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 197. cxix. 54, 55.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 106.

Psalm cxix., vers. 55, 56.—"I thought upon Thy name, O Lord, in the night season, and have kept Thy law. This I had, because I kept Thy commandments."

I. THE keeping of God's law is promoted by the remembering of God's name. The name of God includes all the attributes of God. (1) If I remember the attributes of God, I must remember amongst them a power before which every created thing must do homage; and if I couple with the memory of this power the thought that the undying principle I carry within me must become hereafter an organ of infinite pleasure or of infinite pain, subject as it will be to the irreversible allotments of this power, what is there which can more nerve me to obedience than the remembering God's name? (2) Or suppose that it was the love of God which was specially present to the Psalmist's mind. Who will step forward and produce a motive to Christian obedience which shall be half as stirring as the sense of having been loved with an everlasting

love, and embraced from all eternity by the compassions of the Almighty?

II. Consider how the keeper of God's law is rewarded by keeping it. "I have kept Thy law. This I had, because I kept Thy precepts." While God puts man in a state of grace and afterwards keeps him there, man has a great deal to do with his own progress in grace. The Christian life is a race; no man can start in it unless he has an impulse from God: but once started, he may linger if he will, or he may press onwards if he will. Where grace is improved, more grace is imparted. If the more the Christian keeps the more he finds he has to keep, then keeping one part of the law is clearly preparatory to keeping another. From keeping we are led on to keep. If the keeping of the precepts do thus lead to the keeping of the precepts, every Christian may discern that there is a present reward allotted to those that strive after obedience; and increasing conformity to the image of Christ is that great privilege of the believer which, commencing in time, shall be completed in eternity.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2292.

ALTHOUGH the grace and mercy of the Holy Ghost is indeed free, all-powerful, sovereign, "blowing," as our Lord said, "where it listeth," there is yet a certain frame and temper, certain habits of conduct and behaviour, a certain disposition and preparation of heart and mind, which is likely, if not sure, wherever it is found, to draw down God's further blessing on him who has it. It is itself the good gift of God; and it prepares the way for other and better gifts. This rule and law of God's working is wonderfully illustrated by the manner in which the Gospel was first made known to the Gentiles, and the door of the kingdom of heaven thrown open, by the extension of the gift of the Holy Ghost to them also. This we read in the history of Cornelius, part of which is the Epistle for this day.

I. We see the sort of person whom the Lord delights to honour when we look at Cornelius's condition and observe under how many drawbacks and difficulties, the like of which are too commonly found enough to discourage almost any one, he contrived to be an acceptable worshipper. (1) He was not a Jew, but a Gentile, not one of God's people, but a heathen. Who can express the amount of this disadvantage? (2) He was a soldier, a pursuit and way of life not thought in general particularly favourable to the exercise of true devotion. Yet

he was a devout man, and used himself to serve God, with all his house.

II. Consider the sort of service which Almighty God is likely to bless and approve in persons unfavourably situated, as Cornelius was. (1) He was a devout man, and lived in a sense of God's presence. (2) He served God, with all his house. No doubt he brought on himself the wonder, and sometimes the laughter, of his associates in the Roman army; but still he went on praying himself, and teaching and encouraging his servants to pray. (3) To his prayers he added both alms and fasting—the two wings, as they are called, of prayer. This part of Scripture teaches that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, every condition, under every sort of disadvantage, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness will surely be accepted of Him.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ii., p. 118.

REFERENCES: cxix. 57.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1372; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 134. cxix. 58-60.—J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 198.

Psalm cxix., ver. 59.—"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies."

I. HEBREW scholars tell us that when they get to the root of these words, "I thought on my ways," they find a weaver there working at his loom. That is the figure that lies deep beneath this word—the figure of a man working skilfully at his web, looking to his garment, that he may not be ashamed whatever side may be exposed, careful that on both sides his workmanship is faultless. "I thought on my ways." I turned my life upside down, round about, looked at it from all points of view, as a weaver with his web, so as to have no seamy side, but that it might be equally perfect in its workmanship in all its parts. And when I saw I was wrong, I turned my feet unto God's testimonies.

II. We are not too ready to think about our ways; it is not so easily done as you may think. We learn from the words of David that there are various ways of helping ourselves to look at our ways, to get a sight of ourselves. When David looked at his web embroidery, after looking at the pattern on his frame, he would, as he was anxious to work, and in the measure of his being anxious, and as it grew in his hands—he would become displeased. That is always the sign of a fine worker. No matter what the work is, it is always the sign of a first-rate

craftsman to be never content. That is one feature of the good artist, whatever he is working at; he goes back to the inception of it in his mind, and thinks how fair, and beautiful, and without flaw it lay in his mind: and when he sees it on the frame, on the loom, he sees how far short it has fallen of the image he had about it when it lay on his mind. Always when we look from the stage of hope and intuition we see how far short our present life is. But we can also look at our present ways not only from the past, but by going forward and looking down on them as they are now. Nothing is more stimulating or more improving than to go out of the present and look back, or to ask how we would wish it to be when the work is no longer in our hands. What is it that demoralises the present and makes us weary? That demoralising thing we have yet the present spared us to turn from into the way of God's commands.

A. WHYTE, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 165.

REFERENCE: cxix. 59.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1181.

Psalm cxix., vers. 59, 60.—"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments."

SUCH is the history of almost all solid conversion. The great destroyer of the souls of men, which throughout the whole world is so widely wasting, is not so much wilful, deliberate sin as thoughtlessness. At first sinners do not think; then they will not think; at last they cannot think.

I. This is the history of most of mankind: a thoughtless childhood, careless youth, too thoughtful manhood; one half of life without thought, the other with misplaced thought—thoughtful to things of time and sense, thoughtless of Him who made them and of their real selves.

II. "I thought on my ways." Before this, then, he had not thought on them. "I took account of, reckoned up, calculated, my ways," for our ways, although leading in one direction, are many; there are as many ways as there are acts, or passions, or temptations: and he reckoned them up and took account of them all, whither they were all leading, to turn them all and his whole self into the way of God. Such is the way of all solid conversion.

III. We cannot understand what we are now unless we look back, as far as we may, on all we have been. Not fully to know thyself, as far as thou canst, is to walk blindly on a precipice, where to fall is to perish for ever. Make haste and delay not

to keep God's commandments. Nothing besides lingers. Time is sweeping by. Thy life is hasting away. "Make haste and delay not."

E. B. PUSEY, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 142.

REFERENCES: cxix. 59, 60.—*Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 48. cxix. 63.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vi., p. 172; W. Braden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 52.

Psalm cxix., ver. 64.—"The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy: teach me Thy statutes."

THE Bible has been constructed in such a way that it is an armoury of mercy, a magazine of kindness. It is a great institution of mercifulness.

I. Notice the mercifulness of its eminent secularity, united to tendencies towards eminent spirituality. The Bible is a book of business from beginning to end. It is a book in which a man, although his thoughts touch some of the pinnacles of the new Jerusalem, stands with his feet on the ground. The temporal and secular element of the Scriptures tends to the growth of the great ideal of manhood.

II. Notice the mercifulness of Scripture in using the highest ideal of life in such a manner as not to oppress the great mass of mankind. Throughout the Old Testament and the New, there is this lenity in dealing with men who are striving for an ideal, which makes the Bible the most wonderful of books. On the one side it keeps the picture radiant, so that the eye is dazzled in looking at it, and turns toward the ground; on the other side, with arms about us and with kindly words, as a schoolmaster, it helps us to Christ: and Christ, as our elder Brother, brings us to the Father.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, July 30th, 1873.

Psalm cxix., ver. 67 (Prayer-book version).—"Before I was troubled, I went wrong: but now have I kept Thy word."

I. THE Psalmist was certainly of a different opinion from nine persons out of ten of every country, every age, and every religion. For he says, "Before I was troubled I went wrong: but now have I kept Thy word," whereas nine people out of ten would say to God, if they dared, "Before I was troubled I kept Thy word; but now that I am troubled, of course I cannot help going wrong." The general opinion of the world is that right-doing, justice, truth, and honesty are very graceful luxuries for those who can afford them, very good

things when a man is easy, prosperous, and well-off, and without much serious business on hand, but not for the real hard work of life, not for times of ambition and struggle, any more than of distress and anxiety or of danger and difficulty.

II. What the special trouble was in which the Psalmist found himself, we are not told. But it is plain from his words that it was just that very sort of trouble in which the world is most ready to excuse a man for lying, cringing, plotting, and acting on the old devil's maxim that "cunning is the natural weapon of the weak." His honour and his faith were sorely tried. The ungodly laid wait to destroy him. But against them all he had but one weapon and one defence. However much afraid he might be of his enemies, he was still more afraid of doing wrong. His only safety was in pleasing God, and not men. This man had one precious possession, which he determined not to lose, not though he died in trying to hold it fast; namely, the Eternal Spirit of God, the Spirit of righteousness, and truth, and justice, which leads men into all truth. By that Spirit he saw into the eternal laws of God. By that Spirit he saw that his only hope was to keep those eternal laws. By that Spirit he vowed to keep them. By that Spirit when he failed he tried again; when he fell he rose and fought on once more to keep the commandments of the Lord.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 142.

REFERENCE: cxix. 67.—F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 178.

Psalm cxix., ver. 71.—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes."

TIMES of political decadence are times of spiritual growth. It is out of the inner experience of hidden lives, in ages when statesmen saw little hope, that such priceless contributions have been made to the devotional treasury of humanity as the hymn of Cleanthes, the Meditations of Aurelius, the Confessions of Augustine, and the Imitation of Christ. But first and foremost among these products of the ages of the hidden life is the great Psalm of which the text is the summary. To the literary critic it has all the notes of a silver age. Its structure is artificial, its language stereotyped, its length excessive, its thought monotonous. It might be almost the latest utterance of the dying voice of Hebrew psalmody. And yet the words of this nameless sufferer epitomise exhaustively the religious aspirations and joys and sorrows of the human soul, and have remained, and will remain, without doubt, to the end of time, the great

manual of Christian devotion. And at a time like the present it would be well to strengthen our wavering faith by looking as boldly as did the psalmist at the spiritual fruitfulness of sorrow, and to ask ourselves whether we are making our own sorrows bear their fruit.

I. The earliest form of trouble is for most of us physical pain, and our instinctive tendency is to view pain as an unmitigated evil. But such a view of pain is not in accordance with the facts of life. Pain is beyond question the great educator of the soul. Pain makes men real. It indurates their character. It endows them with spiritual insight. But, beyond all this, pain invests a man with a mysterious attractiveness for others. There is a heroism in the very fact of suffering which lifts the sufferer above us, and makes us feel that he is moving in a realm of being to us unknown, till our sympathy is hushed into something of awe-struck admiration, and from the blending of sympathy with awe comes love.

II. But pain is, after all, but the beginning of troubles. There is the pain which does not unite, but separates—the pain which ends in death. Look below the surface, and death is everywhere. But if it is good for us to have been in the trouble of pain, still more is it good for us to have been in the trouble of parting. The use of death and parting is not to end our human ties, but to translate them into that region where alone they can be everlasting.

III. There is yet another trouble which casts a shadow upon death itself—the trouble of doubt. Many men who are willing enough to believe other troubles good and God-sent shrink back cowardly from the pain of doubt, as if that alone were devil-born. But it is not so. From the moment when the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" went up out of the deep of the midday midnight upon Calvary, doubt was for ever consecrated as the last trial of the sons of God, and a trial needed for their purification, no less than pain or parting.

J. R. Illingworth, *Sermons in a College Chapel*, p. 18.

Reference: cxix. 71.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1629.

Psalm cxix., ver. 72.—"The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

This is a very hard thing to believe. We are to prove that the Bible is a better thing than heaps of money taken by themselves. The Bible can give you better things than

money can ever buy, and the Bible can give you some things that money will not buy at all.

I. Money can buy fine clothes, but the Bible can tell you where you will get better, and get them for nothing. Many a bad man wears a fine coat, just as many a ragged coat covers a glorious soul. The Bible, by telling you where to get your souls adorned by Christ's righteousness and the grace of the Spirit, has a power of adorning the body too. The clothing which Christ gives is better immeasurably than all the fine clothing that all the gold in the world could buy.

II. Money can buy fine houses, but the Bible can tell you where to get a better house for nothing. If you want to know what kind of a house it is, read the account of the new Jerusalem. There you will find your own proper mansion, and nobody will turn you out.

III. Money can buy fine lands, but the Bible tells you where you can get better. For every human being that trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ there is an estate in the heavenly Canaan; there is a lot in the land for him, as was said to Daniel, "at the end of days."

IV. Money can buy friends. Rich people have fine friends; but when the money goes, their friendship cools. Christ is a Friend that will stick closer than a brother.

V. The things which money cannot buy, but which the Bible gives, are: (1) pardon of sin; (2) peace with God; (3) holiness; (4) a happy death.

J. Edmond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 312.

I. This glowing expression of David's love toward God does not stand alone. It is not a solitary, nor even a rare, revelation of his thoughts. Psalm after psalm flows forth in the same strong strain of love; his heart continually overflows; he cannot but give vent to what he feels; he seems constrained to free or ease himself of his thoughts; he is urged by the spirit within him to frequent utterance; and whenever he speaks, he seems to search for the strongest expressions, the strongest figures and forms of speech, to represent what he feels within.

II. In regarding David's state of feeling toward God, this sustained and constant warmth of love which he continually reveals, the sort of holy rapture with which he speaks continually of heavenly things, we feel that it is in this very point of devout warmth, of religious zeal, we fail to resemble or to

approach him. He hurries us beyond our pace; it is difficult to us to praise, to lift up the voice with thanksgiving. There is the want of any strong emotion among us about heavenly things.

III. Some may be greatly sorrowing over their want of zeal and longing to catch David's spirit. Let such patiently persevere in all acts of Christian service, in all Christian duties, in all prayer and supplication, in all faithful use of the means of grace, and the stream will at last break forth in the desert, and the dry heart will blossom as a rose.

J. ARMSTRONG, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 104.

REFERENCES: cxix. 72.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Children's Bread*, p. 11; W. A. Essery, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 212. cxix. 73.—S. Gregory, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 252.

Psalm cxix., vers. 73, 116.—"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. Let me not be ashamed of my hope."

I. CONSIDER the care of the Creator for the lower creatures of His hand. The lower creatures have instincts given to them by God for their preservation. These instincts are adapted to their wants, and they never mislead the creatures to which they are given. In man's spiritual nature, so far removed above the level of the beasts, we find certain instincts implanted by God—instincts evidently given to us to be to our souls in a spiritual way just the same sort of guide that the instincts of the lower creatures are to them in a bodily way.

II. Let us see what these spiritual instincts are. (1) Conscience. We have within us a moral instinct which directs us towards that which is good, which warns us against that which is wrong. Why does God give us this instinct, why does He speak to us through and by it, but because He would guard us from spiritual evil? (2) The sense of justice. This sense of justice is as purely an instinctive feeling as any that man has. And this being so, does it not bear witness to the nature of that Divine Being who has implanted it in man? (3) Prayer is an instinct of the soul of man.

III. It is certainly true that many of the highest of our instinctive moral feelings and powers point towards a life beyond the grave. The whole energy of our spiritual nature does so. For what is this hope that burns within us so vehemently? What is this but an instinctive feeling of our nature? Deep as our faith in God Himself is seated the hope of a life beyond the grave. It is not a belief which

is derived from the outward world. It has its roots deep in man's spiritual nature; it springs from the depths of the soul—an instinct implanted by God to guide man to his distant home. The psalmists had not received the blessed promises of God in Christ; yet they believed that at God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore, so plainly do the spiritual instincts which God has given to man confirm the blessed promises of God in Christ.

G. FORBES, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 109.

REFERENCES: cxix. 83.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 71; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 19. cxix. 88.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1779. cxix. 89-91.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 34. cxix. 89-92.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1656.

Psalm cxix., vers. 89-96 (Prayer-book version).—"O Lord, Thy Word: endureth for ever in heaven. Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another: Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth," etc.

I. IN the Bible usually the Word of the Lord means not only the message which God sends, but Him by whom God sends it. The Word of God, Word of the Lord, is spoken of again and again not as a thing, but as a Person, a living, rational Being, who comes to men, and speaks to them, and teaches them, sometimes seemingly by actual word of mouth, sometimes, again, by putting thoughts into their minds and words into their mouths.

II. The Psalmist wants to know his way through this world and his duty in this mortal life. Therefore he must learn the laws and rules of this world. And he has the sense to see that no one can teach him the rules of the world but the Ruler of the world and the Maker of the world. Then comes the terrible question, Are there any rules at all in the world? Does the Lord manage the world by rules and laws? Or does He let things go by chance and accident, and take no care about them? To that the Psalmist answers firmly, because he is inspired by the Spirit of God, "O Lord, Thy Word endureth"—is settled—"for ever in heaven. In Thee is no carelessness, neglect, slothfulness, nor caprice." The world is full of settled and enduring rules and laws, and God keeps to them.

III. Jesus Christ is the Word of God, who speaks to men God's words, because He speaks not His own words, but His Father's, and does not His own will, but His Father's, who sends Him. He speaks to us and to all men in many ways, and to each according to his needs. He is the Word who

endures for ever in heaven; and though heaven and earth may pass away, His words cannot pass away.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 151 (see also *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 403).

REFERENCES: cxix. 94.—C. Kingsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 346, and *Westminster Sermons*, p. 165.

Psalm cxix., ver. 96.—"I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

IT is not difficult, at least for an earnest and thoughtful person, to see "an end of all perfection" among men; and here below nothing comes to perfection. But we are reminded that there is something else that does not come to an end, something that cannot be exhausted, lost, depreciated, something that rises above us immeasurably high and stretches away around us immeasurably far, with which, too, we are in vital relations from which we can never be released. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

I. We understand the word "commandment" in its proper meaning: a law, an authoritative announcement of the will of God. "As the man is, so is his strength." As God is, so are His commandment, word, will, and way.

II. This commandment extends over all the universe of intelligent life, higher and lower, over angels of every rank and men of every colour and clime, over them, again, in no merely external way, for restraint and direction, but over all intelligence, over all responsibility, over all emotion, over all motive, and of course over words, and action, and conduct.

III. The law or commandment is "exceeding broad" because it is gospel. It is an education, a development, a joy that never palls, a prospect that is never darkened, although our eyes are not always open to see it. This commandment of God, with the Gospel in it, is the very soul of consideration, and tenderness, and grace. It drops down rest on the weary, and brings balm to the wounded, and breathes fresh hope into despairing hearts. It seems to speak to us as though it were a God, and says, "Cast all your cares on me. I am broad enough and strong enough to bear them all."

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 126.

THE lesson of the Psalmist, in modern Christian language, is this: "Amidst all the limitations of nature there is one law which has an infinite working; it is the law of righteousness.

And there is one form of life which is exempted from the general decay; it is the life of holiness, truth, and love."

I. Consider this truth with reference to the lives of individuals. Life may be compared to a various web, in which the bright woof is crossed with many sombre threads; and while the dark warp becomes closer at the further end, the strength of the whole fabric depends in part on the skill and care of the weaver, who is the human soul. Mankind have tried various devices with a view to obviating the great, dark, inevitable fact of human loss and change. Christ clearly taught the blessedness of sorrow. "Blessed are they that mourn." (1) In sorrow we are often best able to realise the love and faithfulness of God. (2) The experience of sorrow gives a deeper and more comprehensive view of the whole meaning and purpose of our existence. (3) The power of sympathy is also increased. (4) Out of the ashes of sorrow there break forth new fires of practical devotion. (5) Suffering, change, loss, appear generally to strengthen in reflective minds the hope of immortality.

II. The life of a community has often been compared to that of an individual. The resemblance is necessarily imperfect. No community can have a unity or continuity of life approaching that of personal consciousness. But the individual and the community have at least this in common, that they are alike liable to change. They have a past and future and also a present, which is different from either past or future, while possessing the elements of both. They have in them the certainty of alteration, the possibilities of progress and decay. They have also their crises of transition, when old things are passing and the new things are not yet clearly seen. What is the practical religious lesson for such a time? How is the reality of progress to be secured? How shall men secure that change be not decay? It may be answered briefly, By the candid recognition of facts; by unabated faith in God and His goodwill to men; and by labouring honestly, according to the light that is given us, to promote what seems to us to be the cause of truth and goodness.

L. CAMPBELL, *Some Aspects of the Christian Ideal*, p. 109.

Psalm cxix., ver. 96.—"Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

OUR text means not the wide compass of the scene and subjects, but the quality of the law, as imperative on man; its authority and requirement applied to so many points; the comprehensiveness, the universality, of its jurisdiction. It reaches

and comprehends the whole extent of things in which there is the distinction of right and wrong, good and evil.

I. In multitudes of minds there is apprehension enough of such a widely extended law to cause disquietude, to excite reaction and a recourse to anything that will seem to narrow that law. We might notice several of the expedients and the aiding causes for this effect of contracting and reducing the extent and magnitude of the Divine law. (1) The bold, direct, decisive one is infidelity, to deny the existence of the supreme Lawgiver Himself. (2) To reject revelation is an expedient little less summary and effectual for the purpose. (3) The indulgence of sin in action or in the heart throws a thick obscurity over the whole vision of the Divine law. (4) The general operation of self-love in a corrupted being is adverse to any clear and effectual acknowledgment of the exceeding breadth of the Divine law. (5) Add to this the influence of the maxims and customs of the world. There is among us a great deal of an accommodating way of thinking of the Divine law, an unsound and treacherous casuistry, a sort of middle principles, by which those of Divine authority are altered, and qualified, and shaped to suit better the habits of the world and the temper of the times, and a defective faith in our Lord's declaration, "No man can serve two masters."

II. All the while, and after all, the Divine law remains in its exceeding breadth. (1) It is "exceeding broad" by the comprehensive applicableness of its grand, simple rules. (2) It is so by the ample order of its special injunctions. (3) It is so by laying an authoritative hand on the first principles and origin from which anything can proceed in human spirit and action; then it reaches to all things that do or can proceed thence.

III. We infer from this: (1) Great self-complacency is a treacherous, deluded, and dangerous state. (2) If such be the law, how impossible is human salvation by it! This gives beforehand a high and rational probability to the new economy constituted in the Mediator: acceptance, justification, salvation, solely and entirely through the work and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

J. Foster, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 324.

If we use the word "perfection" as meaning the attainment of completeness, the writer would seem to say this: "I have seen that everything has its limits; it grows up to a certain stature, it develops certain qualities, and then comes the end: it finishes its work, and can be and do no more. But the Divine law

the truth of God, is not of this character; its boundaries have never yet been reached; it knows nothing of age, of limitations, of decay. Its heights and lengths, its breadths and depths, have never yet been fully perceived by man, and assuredly never yet manifested in his life and conduct. There is far more than he has yet understood, far more than he has ever obeyed."

Consider: I. Present attainments. Few persons will dispute the statement that it is every man's duty to make his nature as complete as possible, to set before himself some ideal of perfection and to work towards that. Having souls capable of growing into the beauty of Divine virtue, capable of becoming Christlike, we ought to have that object as a clear, constant, unfailing purpose before us. Yet with all this, with such an ideal and such aspirations, what cause there is to take up the lament of the words, "I have seen an end of all perfection"! The results of the struggle do sometimes seem to be very disheartening and full of disappointment. The attainments are exceedingly limited when judged by the expectation. There is no reason for despair, for despair even of the ultimate result; but there is reason that we should cast ourselves more on God. Though we are often disappointed, and exclaim, "I have seen an end of all perfection," yet we ought to add, "I will reach toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

II. Unfulfilled demands. By this I understand that, though our attainments in the Divine life are limited, the law of the Divine life is unlimited, and always will be so, so that we set over in direct contrast against human frailty and imperfection the demands which are made by God upon us. The law of life is embodied in Christ; what He is we are to be; the commandment is as broad as that, and nothing less. We are called to be imitators of Him, to be perfect even as He is perfect. It is better to have a perfect law to obey even though the obedience fail again and yet again. We shall be more like Christ, because we try to be perfect even as He was perfect.

> "Sink not in spirit; who aimeth at the sky
> Shoots higher much than he who means a tree."
>
> W. BRADEN, *Catholic Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 49.

Psalm cxix., ver. 96 (Prayer-book and Bible versions).

THE text describes the difference between everything that is of man and everything that is of God. The one has limits, has an end; the other is exceeding broad.

I. "I see that all things come to an end, but Thy word endureth for ever in heaven." What an impression is forced upon us, by the progress of life, of the poverty of man and all that belongs to him in point of duration! It is not only as observers that we feel this. How fleeting are our own possessions, our own treasures, our own topics of absorbing interest. "I see that all things come to an end," not least human wishes, human aims, and human ambitions. How comforting, then, how satisfying, ought it to be to us to know of just one thing which will not thus fail and terminate. "Thy commandment, Thy word, endureth for ever in heaven." The march of centuries affects not that. That is still right which God commanded; that is still wrong which God has forbidden: that is still true which God has revealed; that is still false which God has contradicted.

II. "I have seen an end of all perfection." That which has been said of human life may be said also of human character. Human excellence, human goodness, have a bound, and a narrow one; if you sound it, you reach the bottom; if you measure it, you can take its compass: there is an end of all human perfection, as there is an end of all human duration. We turn with relief to that character, that mind, that word, "exceeding broad," in which there has been no risk of reaching the end, of sounding the depth, or exhausting the fulness.

III. The breadth of God's word, in contrast with the narrowness of human doctrine, is a topic full of interest. How does the Bible comprehend and gather into one all the good parts of all the human systems of theology that were ever framed! The revelation of God as made by Himself is exceeding broad, and the largest of minds and hearts can find room for themselves within it.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 239.

REFERENCES: cxix. 96.—Bishop King, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 149; C. Pritchard, *Good Words*, 1875, p. 843; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines of Sermons for Parochial Use*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 341. cxix. 97.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 17.

Psalm cxix., vers. 99, 100 (Prayer-book version).—"I have more understanding than my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged: because I keep Thy commandments."

By obeying the commands of Scripture we learn that these commands really come from God; by trying we make proof; by doing we come to know. Now how comes this to pass? It happens in several ways.

I. Consider that the Bible tells us to be meek, humble, single-hearted, and teachable. Now it is plain that humility and teachableness are qualities of mind necessary for arriving at the truth in any subject, and in religious matters as well as others. By obeying Scripture then, in practising humility and teachableness, it is evident we are at least in the way to arrive at the knowledge of God. On the other hand, impatient, proud, self-confident, obstinate men are generally wrong in the opinions they form of persons and things.

II. Consider, next, that those who are trained carefully according to the precepts of Scripture gain an elevation, a delicacy, refinement, and sanctity of mind which is most necessary for judging fairly of the truth of Scripture.

III. Those who try to obey God evidently gain a knowledge of themselves at least, and this is the first and principal step towards knowing God. The more a man understands his own heart, the more are the Gospel doctrines recommended to his reason. The Bible then seems to say, "God is not a hard Master to require belief without affording grounds for believing. Only follow your own sense of right, and you will gain from that very obedience to your Maker which natural conscience enjoins a conviction of the truth and power of that Redeemer whom a supernatural message has revealed: you will bear witness to the truth of one doctrine by your own past experience of yourselves; of another, by seeing that it is suited to your necessity; of a third, by finding it fulfilled upon your obeying it."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 239.

Consider the facts in which lie the germs of the control which the Scriptures must exert over the progress of mankind.

I. The Scriptures contain the most ancient forms of truth now known to men. In any enlarged form of the forces which civilise communities, a place must be found for the instinctive reverence of the human mind for antiquity. A thing is presumptively true if it is old, and an old truth men *will* revere.

II. The sovereignty of the Scriptures in the progress of mankind is further suggested by the fact that they contain the only development of Oriental mind which can be an authority in the civilisation of the future.

III. The Bible is already wrought into all the dominant forces of the civilisation of the West. Christianity has wrought such revolutions of opinion; it has thrown into the world so

much of original thought; it has organised so many institutions, customs, unwritten laws of life; it has leavened society with such a powerful antiseptic to the putrescent elements of depravity; and it has therefore positively created so much of the best material of humanity, that now the noblest type of civilisation cannot be conceived of otherwise than as a debtor to the Christian Scriptures.

IV. The Bible discloses the only groundwork and process of a perfect civilisation, as a practicable result. The idea out of which the future civilisation must grow is here, there, everywhere, in the book of life. That idea is the moral regeneration of the individual. (1) Christianity exalts spiritual over material forces. (2) It intensifies individual being. (3) Its whole process is a process of symmetrical elevation. (4) It works a power which is diffusive. (5) It is affluent in the production of certain auxiliary ideas. These, like itself, are spiritual; and they take on social, and civil, and political forms. (6) While throwing out these ideas, the Bible does exhibit a certain Divine consciousness that they must and will, and a purpose that they shall, become constructive elements in society. This is exhibited, *e.g.*, in that most luminous fact in Scriptural history that God educates nations as the representatives of principles. Starting thus with the idea of the moral regeneration of the individual, the word of God conducts us, by easy and inevitable stages, to that truth which becomes its own witness to a Christian believer that the civilisation of the future and the triumph of Christianity are identical.

A. PHELPS, *Sermon*, preached Jan. 2nd, 1861.

REFERENCES: cxix., 99, 100.—J. Keble, *Sermons Academical and Occasional*, pp. 1, 24; J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. viii., p. 110.

Psalm cxix., ver. 105.—"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

THE two parts of this verse are not two different ways of saying the same thing. The word of God is a lamp or lantern to the feet at night; it is a light like that of the sun by day. It makes provision in this way for the whole of life. It is the secret of life's true sunshine; it is the guide when all around is dark. Now here we are met by the fact that in an age and country like ours the Bible is everywhere to be met with; and yet of the millions who possess, and now and then read, it how many can say at all seriously, "Thy word is a lantern unto

my feet and a light unto my path"? What is the reason? The answer must be that certain conditions are attached to this guiding and illuminating function of the Bible, and that when it fails to guide and to lighten these conditions cannot be complied with. It is important to ask, What are they?

I. The first condition is that the Bible should be diligently searched for those truths, those precepts, those examples, which will directly guide us through life to our eternal home.

II. Again, in order to succeed in the search for the true import of Scripture, we need method, order, regularity, purpose —above all, purpose in reading it.

III. If the Bible is to light us on the road to eternity, we should surely welcome the guidance of the Church of Christ when we read it.

IV. If the Bible is to do its work, we must be careful to act upon each truth it teaches us as we learn it. While ordinary knowledge, as a rule, is remembered until the memory decays, moral and religious knowledge is soon forgotten if it is not acted out. The reason for this is that in the one case the will is interested and in the other it is not interested. Just so far as the will is exerted in order to make truth practically our own, just so far does it become to us present and real, not merely a light without, but a light within, us.

H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 369.

What a lamp is to us in the night or in darkness, the word of God is said to be to us in the journey of life; it is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. This implies that life is like a journey in the dark or a sojourn in some place of gloom, and that it is the Bible which is to supply to us the illumination that is needful for us in such circumstances.

I. Whether we view man in relation to the great end of his existence as a free agent, subject to the law and responsible to the judgment of God, or as a moral being, capable of appreciating the right and finding his true felicity and dignity in choosing and following it, or as a creature capable of happiness, yet exposed to many accidents, by which he is sorely tried and his peace is apt to be utterly disturbed, we shall alike arrive at the conclusion that without such a guide as the Bible supplies his path through life would indeed be dark, hopeless, disastrous.

II. Think of the certainty of this light. In it there is no wavering, no ambiguity, no indefiniteness. It is a pure

light, a clear light, a steady light, an unfailing light. It burns with a lustre that never grows feeble, and casts a radiance from which nothing is hid.

III. Think of its sufficiency. It is not only a light to lighten the eyes, not only a lamp to throw its lustre over our path; it is also a light to the feet, discovering to us all even the minutest features of the path we have to tread—all its roughnesses, all its breaks and hollows, all on it that would impede our progress or cause us to stumble if unobserved, but which observed we can avoid.

IV. And what a marvellous vitality there is in this light! Other lights have flashed and faded; other guides have offered themselves and been followed, and the blind has led the blind into the ditch, and both have perished. But this light abides as clear, and bright, and beneficent as ever.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 39.

REFERENCES: cxix. 105.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 257; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 199; T. Champness, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 424; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 336.

Psalm cxix., ver. 109.—"My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Thy law."

THE character of Isaiah.

I. The character of Isaiah is apparent through his writings, in all its clear and separate parts, as the pebbles of a beach seen at the bottom of translucent water or the objects of the wood and hill seen through the atmosphere which bathes and penetrates them. His writings show him to have been a man having a greater tendency towards objective than subjective religion. While Jeremiah is ever studying and lamenting over his own internal condition, Isaiah is ever looking outwards on the external objects of the kingdom of God; Jeremiah seems to discover God through personal experience, Isaiah through His word and works; while Jeremiah laments over his own short-comings, Isaiah rejoices over the coming glories of the Gospel.

II. We might without much difficulty divide the whole of Isaiah's prophecy into three parts, the first being the description of the sinfulness of the people, the second the remedy in the atonement of Christ, the third the establishment of the Church in its great external system, each of the portions being considered in a peculiarly objective manner.

III. Men who are described in Holy Scripture range themselves under each class: the objective and the subjective. The deep self-searchings of David, the melancholy wailings of Jeremiah, the mournful dirges of Jacob, the wild death-song of Hezekiah, the pathetic appeals to God's protection of Micah, the communings of Moses, and the bold yet morbid reasonings of Jonah range these under the standard of what I have called subjectiveness. On the other hand, the sombre dignity of Samuel, the unquestioning obedience of Abraham, the magnificent hosannas of Isaiah, the stern simplicity of Daniel, the unflinching rebukes of Elijah, and the mystic parables of Ezekiel make them fitting heralds for the silent footsteps of the ever-pondering Virgin, the rapt gaze of St. John, and the unhesitating simplicity of St. Andrew and St. Nathanael.

IV. Both spirits are needed for the Church. But neither spirit is safe by itself. It is as a single wing to a bird, wanting the other wing to bear it safely through the counter-currents of mid-air. Without the one tone we may fail in reverence, without the other in love. Without the one we may fail in obedience, without the other in a living hope.

E. MONRO, *Practical Sermons on the Characters of the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 177.

Psalm cxix., ver. 111.—"Thy testimonies have I claimed as mine heritage for ever."

I. CONSIDER, first, the claim asserted by David: that God's testimonies are his heritage for ever. The term "testimonies" denotes all those revelations of His own nature, attributes, and will which God has been pleased to make of Himself. They are facts which we know not by the light of reason, but by God's witness, facts not which man demonstrates, but which God testifies. Speaking as a Jew, David declares, with feelings of thanksgiving and triumph, that he from his birth has had a rightful possession of God's revelations. In examining into the cause of David's thankfulness, we are brought to the broad subject of ancestral religion. If we had not received our religion as a heritage, we might never have enjoyed it at all. Those who have inherited their religion and walk in righteousness have nothing to regret, but all to be thankful for, in their present position. Those who have inherited their religion and walk unrighteously in all likelihood, if they had not inherited it, would never have believed. Which of us is certain that

if we had met Christ face to face in the valleys of Judah, we should not have despised Him?

II. The Jewish king claims God's testimonies as his inheritance not for the brief period of his mortal life, but for ever, as though implying that they would hereafter form the source of his joy and triumph. The world and the works that are therein shall pass away, but in the midst of the universal wreck one thing shall remain: the word of God. The testimony of the Most High has been the heritage of the elect, and that shall endure. Inheritors of Christ's faith, let us walk worthy of our portion; inheriting it from the saints of old, let us keep it undefiled, using it while we live for our own salvation, and labouring to hand it down unmutilated to the generation to come.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i., p. 15.

REFERENCES: cxix. 111.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 6th series, p. 94; M. R. Vincent, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 231; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 199.

Psalm cxix., ver. 113.—"I hate vain thoughts."

I. FIRST, what are vain thoughts? (1) There are the vain, worldly thoughts, which we must hate. Thoughts which in themselves are perfectly harmless and innocent may become vain through being welcomed and entertained at the wrong season. The same thoughts may become sinful and vain through mere excess, through occupying our minds overmuch. The world must be very near us when the worldly thought is ever with us. Our treasure, our best treasure, must assuredly be there, else our heart and the thought of our heart would not be always there also. (2) But if a wise man will watch against these thoughts about this world, which are only sinful when indulged or allowed at a wrong time or in excess, how much more will he hate those that in their nature and essence are sinful, as, for example, impure thoughts, being such as more than any other sully and defile the mirror of the soul, and render it incapable of giving back the pure image of God. (3) The transition to other thoughts, to such as we more immediately ascribe to the devil, is easy. It will be enough to indicate proud thoughts in general as the third division of those we have to consider.

II. Consider the remedies for vain thoughts. Chase them wholly away we never shall, but let them find no entertainment from us. As often as they visit us, let them drive us to Him by whose holy inspiration alone we are able either to think those things which be good, or to refuse to think those things which be evil;

let them drive us to Him in a real, though it may be a voiceless, prayer, in a brief meditation on the glories of heaven or on the pains of hell, or on Christ hanging upon His Cross and bearing there the penalty of our sins, or on Christ coming to judgment and bringing to light all hidden things of darkness, and this wicked thought of ours among the rest. In devices such as these we must find our help.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 123 (see also *Sermons Preached in Ireland*, p. 201).

REFERENCES: cxix. 113.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, pp. 109, 120; H. F. Burder, *Sermons*, p. 13; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 253.

Psalm cxix., ver. 116.—"Uphold me according unto Thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope."

THE fact that hope may spring from tribulation, though only hinted at by the Psalmist in the text, is largely asserted by St. Paul when he says, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

I. Take the case of those in whom a work of grace is going forward, who are striving to submit themselves to the operations of God's Spirit; and how true it is of them that "tribulation worketh patience." There is nothing else which can work it. We can only know ourselves possessed of any particular quality when God, in His providence, shall put that quality to the proof. Patience is wrought out by tribulation, not by tribulation in itself, but by tribulation bringing the Christian to reflection and to prayer.

II. "Patience worketh experience." There are various senses in which the word "experience" may be taken; but it properly denotes the putting something to the proof, making the sort of trial which is made of metals by placing them in the fire, in order to the detecting and disentangling the dross. Hence the experience here mentioned by St. Paul must be the ascertaining the precise worth, veracity, and power of the consolations and promises of God. The season of tribulation is the season chosen of God for the especial manifestation of His faithfulness and love.

III. And from experience how natural, how easy, the transition to hope. Surely he who has tried the chart and found it correct, so far as he had the power of trying it, has the best ground for confidence in that chart with regard to ports which he has never yet entered. If we do not register our mercies, or if we never recount them, they are not likely to throw light

on coming events. He must be grateful for the past who would be hopeful for the future.

IV. "Ashamed of my hope." This accords accurately with the concluding words of the passage from St. Paul, "Hope maketh not ashamed." How different, then, from any other hope. For is not hope commonly spoken of as most delusive and deceitful? There is nothing airy and unsubstantial which is not taken as too faithful a representation of hope. But Christian hope "maketh not ashamed." It paints no vision which shall not be more than realised; it points to no inheritance which shall not be reached. How should it make ashamed, when it altogether rests itself upon Christ, who is not "ashamed to call us brethren"?

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2080.

REFERENCES: cxix. 117.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 180; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1657; Archbishop Thomson, *Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 16.

Psalm cxix., ver. 126.—"It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law."

THE text brings before us:

I. A melancholy fact: "Men have made void Thy law." This might at first view seem impossible, as if it were the defeat of Omnipotence itself by the creature it has made; but there is a sphere in which even the function of Omnipotence itself becomes restrained or transformed, in order that there may exist created wills, and that there may be a kingdom in which subjects obey not because they must, but because they choose. The sphere and sweep of these laws and their action are not to be without the man, but within him. God stands related to us now chiefly through these laws. In conscience, in the Decalogue, and in the Gospel of His Son, the law of the Spirit of life—in all that expresses the Divine will—He speaks to us. They together make up that law which, in the words of our text, "men have made void." If it be inquired how men have made void the law of God, we answer: (1) By assailing its authority (*a*) in denying the personality of its source; (*b*) in palliating the gravity of its transgression; (*c*) in restricting the area of its rule. (2) By disparaging its sufficiency.

II. The urgent appeal, "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work." There is a wonderful boldness, I might say audacity, in this language of the Psalmist—a summons of God to the rescue of

His own world. And yet such challenge is the privilege of earnest men. It is the violence which takes heaven by force. God does not resent it; He hears it; He invites it; He answers it. When God arises to work, we know not what will be the form and fashion of His operations. If the Lord begins to work, we may expect a wondrous effusion of the Holy Spirit both upon His Church and the world, which is still estranged from His law and love. With the outpouring of the Spirit the Church in reality began. In the New Testament the work of Christ has no meaning except as it is unfolded by the Holy Spirit; it has no power except as it is applied by the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is as much the Gospel of the Holy Spirit as it is the Gospel of the Son of God.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 19.

I. LOOK, first, at the complaint. A law is made void: (1) by misinterpretation; (2) by being encumbered with contradictory or inconsistent requirements; (3) when, being understood, it is in practice ignored and accounted a dead letter; (4) when the obligation is denied; (5) when, the obligation being acknowledged, the penalty is incurred and braved, and the law-giver defied.

II. The appeal, "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work." What in such a case can God do? (1) Vindicate His law by punishment. This He did in the Flood. (2) Bring forward His law by republishing it. Thus did He work at Sinai. (3) Pardon the transgression and rewrite His law on the heart. This is the work of God alone. Creature may punish creature; man may republish God's law, and call to it universal attention; but who can forgive sins but God alone? who can write his law so as to secure obedience upon the heart? Pardon is God's prerogative, and purification is God's own work.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, No. xvii.

REFERENCES: cxix. 126-128.—A. Maclaren, *The Secret of Power*, p. 81, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 146.

Psalm cxix., ver. 129.—"Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them."

I. CONSIDER, first, how the wonderfulness of God's word is calculated to produce the observance of it. The human mind is possessed of certain faculties, and subject to certain sensations. Amidst these sensations very prominent is that feeling o surprise which overtakes us at the sight of what is unexpected, or exceeds all our conceptions, or extends beyond the grasp

of our understanding. This is the faculty of wonder. We have many instances before us of wonder acting upon the soul and constraining it to obey. The mind is more moved by the words of one whom we have not seen, and whom we image to ourselves vaguely, often untruly, than by one of whom we feel that we know all about him. And we can easily transfer our argument to the instance of God and revelation. If God were a being whom we felt we could measure, if there was nothing to baffle our deepest inquiries, nothing to awe, to prostrate, to overwhelm, we might not indeed have to meet the jest of the scoffer or the sneer of the infidel; but neither, on the other hand, should we find spirits rapt away from earth and earthly things and loving to build their homes in the word of the Lord. The wonderfulness of the law constitutes its bondage over the spirit.

II. From the above doctrine flow several important practical lessons. (1) It it be true that wonder is closely connected with reverence, that, in short, the marvellous exerts in religion, as in other things, a great power over the soul of man, then we shall cease to be surprised that the Almighty has not spoken more clearly. (2) The statutes which are to be kept must be not a theory of reason, but of wonder; they must afford food for the imagination as well as exercise for the understanding. (3) There is also an application of the text to the subject of public worship. You must have in your religious ceremonial also something which will appeal to the imagination as well as to the reason, otherwise you will soon have coldness and indifference.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i., p. 258.

REFERENCE: cxix. 129.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 200.

Psalm cxix., ver. 130.—"The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

I. THERE is no book by the perusal of which the mind is so much strengthened and so much enlarged as it is by the perusal of the Bible. There is nothing so likely to elevate and endow with new vigour our faculties as the bringing them into contact with stupendous truths and the setting them to grasp and measure these truths. If the human mind grows dwarfish and enfeebled, it is ordinarily because left to deal with commonplace facts, and never summoned to the effort of taking the span and altitude of broad and lofty disclosures. The Bible, whilst the only book for the soul, is the best book for the intellect,

The sublimity of the topics of which it treats, the dignified simplicity of its manner of handling them, the nobleness of the mysteries which it develops, the illumination which it throws on points the most interesting to those conscious of immortality—all these conspire to bring round a result which we insist upon as actual and necessary; namely, that the man who should study the Bible and not be benefited by it spiritually would be benefited by it intellectually.

II. The text ascribes to the Bible precisely that energy for which we have contended. The assertion is that the entrance of God's word gives light, and that it gives also understanding to the simple. We have shown that a mind dark through want of instruction or weak through its powers being naturally poor or long unexercised would become either illuminated or strengthened through acquaintance with the contents of Scripture. But the passage applies with far greater force to the converted than to the unconverted. (1) On conversion there is given to man an increased measure of understanding. In all cases a marked change passes over the human spirit when the heart is renewed by the influences of God's Spirit. The man will have a clearer and less biassed judgment. His views will be wider, his estimates more correct. His understanding, having been exercised on truths the most stupendous, will be more competent for the examination of what is difficult or obscure. His reason, having learned that much lies beyond her province, as well as much within, will give herself to inquiries with greater humility and greater caution, and therefore, almost to a moral certainty, with greater success. (2) Consider certain of the reasons of this fact. (*a*) The truths which have been commended to the belief are the most sublime and spirit-stirring of all that can engage the attention of mankind. (*b*) The moral renovation at conversion will be also to a certain extent an intellectual one. Since at the entrance of God's word the man is renewed in holiness, we have a right to expect that he will also be renewed in understanding. (*c*) The entrance of God's words denotes such an application to the soul of the truths of revelation that they become influential on the life and conversation.

H. MELVILL, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 147.

Psalm cxix., ver. 131.—"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Thy commandments."

WE shall consider the Psalmist as here drawing a contrast

between the unsatisfying character of what is finite and the power which there is in Divine things of filling all the desires of the soul.

I. David is speaking as a man who had made trial of created good, and had proved its insufficiency. He had not indeed exhausted the good, though its pursuit had exhausted him; but he had tried it to such a point as to ascertain that it was limited. He saw how far wealth or wisdom could go in filling the desires of man, and he ascertained their inadequacy; they would still leave him exhausted and panting. With the generality of men the opinion seems to be that the dissatisfaction arises from there remaining still so much unpossessed, but we maintain that the soul can be satisfied with nothing of which it can discover the limits. It will exhaust all which it can prove to be not inexhaustible. And therefore wherein can the soul be satisfied but in God, of whom alone we may affirm that He is not to be overtaken by the marching of the soul, not weighed in her balances, not comprehended within her horizon?

II. "I longed for Thy commandments." The whole Law is summed up in the injunction of love—the love of our Maker and of all men for His sake. And if love be thus the fulfilling of the Law, we cannot wonder that David should set the commandments in contrast with all created things, as though you could not take the span of the one, though you might of the other. It is the surprising property of the law of God that, though condensed into few precepts, it spreads itself over every department of conduct, so that no possible case is left unprovided for. And yet, notwithstanding this largeness of the commandment of God, the Divine law is not that which at first sight we should be disposed to compare, in respect of satisfying power, with finite perfection. We should have been inclined to fix on the favour of God, or on the joys which He communicates to His people, as affording that material of satisfaction which is so vainly sought in any earthly good. But let the matter be carefully examined, and we shall find that it is strictly for the commandment that the wearied soul ought to long. (1) Man's happiness lies in obedience to the commandment. (2) The commandments are summed up in love. In loving God, we throw down the burden which, if unremoved, must press us down everlastingly into the depths of wretchedness, and we take hold of immortality, as purchased for us, and prepared, and reserved.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2380.

Psalm cxix., ver. 132.—"Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name."

WHAT is this love of God's name which is so very precious, and how is it to be obtained?

I. We know how it is with us when we love any person among men very dearly. It is a joy and satisfaction to us only to hear his name, or to see it anywhere written or printed. So it is with those who have any spark of true love towards God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God. They are glad to see these sacred names in the Bible or in any other good book, and to hear them pronounced with religious reverence.

II. If we truly loved that name, would we not bear it in mind continually, and hide it in our heart, that we might not sin against it? Would not this saying of the wise man be ever present in our minds: "I will not sin, knowing that I am accounted Thine"? One way or another, true love will make us evermore on the watch that the name of the Beloved which we carry about with us may in no way suffer through our neglect.

III. Those who so love God's name see what a mighty encouragement is held out to them. They are sure of being looked on and of obtaining mercy. For it is said, "Thou usest to do so unto those that love Thy name." Almighty God will look upon devout persons; He will not turn His face away from them; He will be merciful to them when they confess their sins. He promises that nothing at all shall be lost which we do simply and truly for the love of His name.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 245.

Psalm cxix., ver. 133.—"Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

I. THIS verse recognises and accepts the obligation of moral order: "Order my steps."

II. It fixes the legitimate source and centre of that order: "In Thy word." The Bible centres, regulates, restrains, and establishes a man.

III. It deprecates the consequences of moral lawlessness, the dominion of iniquity.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 247.

REFERENCES: cxix. 133.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 878. cxix. 136.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxi., p. 15. cxix. 140.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, pp. 290, 299; A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 25.

Psalm cxix., ver. 141 (Prayer-book version).—"I am small, and of no reputation: yet do I not forget Thy commandments."

I. Man, among all his other weaknesses, is so prone to vanity, conceit, and pride that in teaching the lesson of self-respect, in pressing on you the truth that we are greater than we know, some might fear that we were but putting one more stumbling-block in the path of that humility which is the rarest, as it is the sweetest, of all Christian virtues. But the self-respect which God would have us yield is the parent of humility and the annihilation of pride; it is founded on just those things which every one of us enjoys, which none can monopolise, wherein no man differs from another. It is founded on the possession of that immortal soul which God has given alike to the prince and to the beggar.

II. All but a few of us have a lot in life all the harder to bear because in the pathos of it everything is below the level of tragedy, except the passionate egotism of the sufferer. Our complaints and miseries arise in no small measure from our failure to grasp the real meaning and to understand the universal experience of life; they rise because, dropping the substance, we grasp at the shadow; they rise because we take for solid realities the bubbles which burst at a touch. It is of infinite importance to ourselves and to the world that we should not yield to these feelings. We need for ourselves, the world needs for us as fellow-workers with God, all the joy, all the spring, all the elasticity, all the vigour, all the hope, which man will leave us.

III. Our lot is nothing exceptional, nothing to complain of, nothing to be depressed at. It is just the common, the all but universal, lot. Be good and true, and you cannot then be in reality or in the truth of things commonplace or insignificant. Each one of us is exactly as great as he is in God's sight, and no greater. You may think yourself nothing now and here, but for every good soldier of Jesus Christ all trumpets shall sound on the other side. The Psalmist deeply felt this truth when he wrote the words of the text: "I am small and of no reputation: yet—" and what a burst of triumph, what a rush of hope, what a force of conviction, lies in that word "yet"!—"yet do I not forget Thy commandments."

F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 337.

References: cxix. 144.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1572. cxix. 148.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1613. cxix. 151.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 445.

Psalm cxix., ver. 158.—"I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Thy word."

CONSIDER what there is in the breaking of God's law to justify such manifestation of grief as you read of in the writings of David.

I. Look, first, at the dishonour done to God by the violation of His law. Every one who reflects at all on his relationship to his Maker and the accuracy with which that Maker has written Himself in His laws must readily acknowledge that it is to insult the Supreme Being to set at nought His precepts. If a man loves God, zeal for the glory of God will be necessarily the chief and dominant feeling of his mind. Can it then be with indifference, can it be without emotions of the most lively concern, that he beholds this Being dishonoured by his fellow-men?

II. Consider the ruin which transgressors are bringing upon themselves. The good man is not void of affection for his fellow-men, but, on the contrary, feels for them a love which true religion is sure to produce. He must feel for the wicked as he beholds them following courses which he is sure will issue in destruction.

III. Think of the injury which transgressors are causing to others. Let the Law be universally kept, and all that is most glorious in prophecy would be rapidly realised. And shall it not, then, be with a genuine and deep sorrow that the righteous man, eager for a period of universal happiness, beholds the transgressors who are deferring that period and prolonging the reign of confusion and misery? Let none, therefore, rest till, having sorrowed deeply for their own sins, they feel themselves made sorrowful by the sins also of others. "This," as Archbishop Leighton says, "is perhaps a stronger evidence of sincerity. There seems to be more of God in it, because less of ourselves and our own particular interest."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2053.

Psalm cxix., ver. 160.—"Thy word is true from the beginning."

I. WE cannot read the Old Testament without seeing that the whole of it rests on the basis of a history—the history contained in what we call the books of Moses. Now, if you turn to the New Testament, you will find that it begins, in like manner, with a history: the history of the four Gospels; and what the Pentateuch is to the Old Testament, the Gospels are to the

New. Here, then, is a symmetry in the two parts of the Bible. Each begins with a history which pervades and inspires all that follows. Only, the two histories are different, while they are connected. The one is that of a Divinely chosen people, selected for a special purpose. The other is that of a Divine Person. And a person is superior to a people merely as a people, as a corporate body, for a person has an immortality: a nation has not; and a person can be charged with far higher lessons than a nation. The two histories are on two planes, a lower and a higher; the lower is imperfect without the higher, and the higher assumes and completes the lower.

II. If you look to the Old Testament, you will find that there is a second stage after the Pentateuch. It is a struggle to obtain a place where the original history may find a firm footing, and may unfold itself for the good of the world. This is the history of Joshua, and Judges, and Samuel, and those that follow after. In the New Testament there is a similar period, contained chiefly in the Acts of the Apostles; but it penetrates also the Epistles. The Apostles and disciples are struggling to find a lodgment for the history of the great Person with whom they have come in contact. Only, the place is no more one country, but the whole earth.

III. If you turn again to the Old Testament, you will find a third stage. It is the period of reflection. Thought is folded over on the past in meditation. This brings us into the centre of the Old Testament—to the books of Psalms and many of the prophets. In the New Testament there is a corresponding period, showing the same marks. It is in the Epistles of Paul and of his fellow-disciples. The Gospels give us great events, but the conclusions are not fully drawn; and Christ promises the Spirit of Truth to guide, to show the way into all truth.

IV. Notice one closing period in this comparison. We may call it the sense of incompleteness. This is the period of prophecy proper, of many of the Psalms, of Isaiah and the later prophets. As the sun of the past is setting, another Sun arises: the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings; and that Sun shall no more go down. The Old Testament closes with this intent, bending gaze on the future, and closes not having received the promise, but being persuaded of it and embracing it. And the New Testament has this period also. As the Old Testament ends by looking for Christ's first coming, the New finishes with a cry for His second. Its last words

breathe out a response to His promise, "Behold, I come quickly:" "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 186.

REFERENCE: cxix. 162.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1641.

Psalm cxix., ver. 165.—"Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

IN the margin of the Bible the latter words of this verse are rendered, "They shall have no stumbling-block."

I. Consider the character of the parties whom the Psalmist describes: they "love the law of God." It is no ordinary degree of spiritual attainment which is indicated by the fact of loving God's law. If a man do not feel assured of pardon through the blood of the Redeemer, what but terror—heart-felt terror—can be excited by the contemplation? We must have stepped much beyond the first elements of religion if we can vouch as a truth that we love God because His essence is holiness, and that we love Him because His essence is justice. When we have come to love redemption because into it are gathered all the attributes of God, we are prepared also to love the law in which all these attributes are imaged.

II. Consider why there are no stumbling-blocks to those who thus love God's law. (1) The unequal distribution both of good and evil in this life is often a perplexing thing to the righteous; but he who loves the law is quite assured of the justice and faithfulness of God, and can refer with the greatest cheerfulness to the disclosures of the final assize for the solution of every problem which is too hard for present investigation. (2) When afflictions come thick on the godly man, they have a tendency to stagger him or to serve as a stumbling-block. But the man who loves God's law, knowing each attribute, loving each attribute, will be meekly confident that the issue must be right, though the process may be dark. (3) Christ Jesus Himself is a stumbling-block to the great mass of mankind. But let a man have that knowledge of the law which shows him its requirements, and therefore that love of the law which would make him shrink from its compromise, and it is not possible that he should be offended at all at what St. Paul calls the "offence of the Cross;" and thus it is as a lover of the law that he surmounts the stumbling-block.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 4984.

FROM these words we learn:—

I. That true religious peace consists in maintaining a sincere

love of Almighty God and of His declared will: "Great peace have they which love Thy law." By the law of God may be understood either the exercise of that providential power by which He sustains, governs, and directs the whole course of the world, the circumstances of nations and of individuals, or more strictly that revealed law of life and conduct by which we are bound wholly to regulate ourselves, as they who must hereafter "give an account of their own works." (1) Great is the peace of those who love to live "soberly." They are thoroughly and heartily satisfied with their own condition in life, whatever it be. (2) Great is the peace of those who love to live "righteously;" that is, with a sincere love of all others. For whereas it is the want of this love which causes so much quarrelling, malice, and unkindness in the world, the possession of it would at once produce peace and harmony, if not in others towards us, at least in us towards others. (3) Great is the peace also of those who love to live "godly" in this present world of darkness and corruption. For, having their affections set on things above and their conversation in heaven, they sit loose to all the interests of this transitory state.

II. "Nothing shall offend them"—offend, that is, make them to stumble or fall. Whosoever then truly loves God's law, nothing will offend him; nothing will be of power sufficient to turn him aside from his steady course of faithful obedience. (1) Thus as he sincerely loves to live soberly, so, whatever difficulties or obstacles occur, he is not offended, will not give up his resolution. (2) Again, as he loves to live righteously, so nothing will offend him in the practice of it. (3) As he loves to live godly, so nothing will prevent him availing himself of all the privileges which accompany the practice of true devotion. He endeavours to make everything which befalls him the occasion of some direct religious act of confession, faith, or thanksgiving.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 28.

I. We see here, first, a possession: great peace. (1) There may be peace without great peace. (2) This peace is connected with obedience. (3) Love must be the affectional bond.

II. An exemption: "Nothing shall offend them." (1) Circumstances do not hurt them, or are not a stumbling-block to them. (2) Temptations do not hurt them. (3) Death does not hurt them.

W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 88.

Psalm cxix., ver. 176.—"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments."

I. LIKE all true prayer, the text begins with confession. It describes our condition as it is in God's sight; it penetrates to the heart, and shows us whence it is that sin flows, whatever be its visible and outward manifestations. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." We know well who is that Shepherd of our souls from whom we have wandered. We know, with our understandings at least, what God has done for us in redeeming us by the blood of Christ. We know, too, what it must be to have wandered from Him; that it implies a want of love to God, a want of gratitude for His kindness to us, a want of interest in thinking and hearing of Him, a want of regard for His word and for all the means of grace which He has given us.

II. "O seek Thy servant." How much is implied in these few words. We have wandered from God; and now, like a sheep that has strayed from its fold and lost all trace of the way by which it should return, we ask God to seek us: we ask Him by His Spirit to track, as it were, our wanderings, to come after us into that waste, howling wilderness in which we have lost ourselves, and to give us at once the will and the power to hear His voice and follow Him. Such is the mystery of our spiritual life. God must first seek us if we are truly to seek Him, and yet it is in our seeking of Him that we can best recognise His search after us.

III. "Seek Thy servant." How does God seek man? Not alone in the direct call of His Son's Gospel, which is come unto us, as it is to all the world; but in every circumstance of our life, in every mercy we enjoy from His hands, nay in every interruption of our comfort and happiness, we have a speaking sign of His presence, a fresh pledge of that love which will scarcely allow us to forget it, unless already our eyes and ears be closed in wilful hardness against its appeal.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: cxix. 176.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 171; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 25. cxix.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 261. cxx. 5.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 249. cxx. 6.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 182. cxx.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 1.

Psalm cxxi., ver. 1.—"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

IN these first words of one of the greatest Psalms of David, the

nobleness which we immediately feel seems to lie in this, that David will seek help only from the highest source. Nothing less than God's help can really meet his needs. He will not peer into the valleys, he will not turn to fellow-men, to nature, to work, to pleasure, as if they had the relief he needed. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth." It is the duty of every man to seek help from the Highest in every department of his life.

I. Take, first, the everlasting struggle with temptation. How perfectly clear it is that any man who undertakes that struggle may look either to the valleys or to the hills for help, may call the lower or the higher powers to his aid. The fear of pain, the fear of disgrace, the fear of discomfort, and the shame that comes with the loftiest companionship—we may have to appeal to them all in the hours, which come so often in our lives, when we are very weak. But, after all, the appeal to these helpers is not the final cry of the soul. Obedience to God is the only final and infallible help of the soul in its struggle with temptation.

II. Not merely in temptation, but in sorrow, a man may seek the assistance of the Highest or of some other power which is far lower. The real relief, the only final comfort, is God; and He relieves the soul always in its suffering, not from its suffering; nay, He relieves the soul by its suffering, by the new knowledge and possession of Himself which would come only through that atmosphere of pain.

III. Our truth is nowhere more true than in the region of doubt and perplexity of mind.

IV. The text is true with reference to man's escape from sin. The best spiritual ambition seeks directly holiness. It seeks pardon as a means to holiness. So it lifts its eyes up at once to the very highest hills.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 270.

REFERENCE: cxxi. 1.—C. A. Fowler, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 223.

Psalm cxxi., vers. 1, 2.

To the mind of the Jewish poet the everlasting hills of his native land were as shadows of the Infinite. The security which these mountain-ranges afforded to Palestine, forming as they did so remarkable a barrier to the land on every side except towards the sea, suggested to the writer of the Psalm an emblem of the Divine protection.

I. Here we have the grand distinction between the faith of

the Jew and that of the heathen. The Jew knew that "the gods of the heathen are but idols, but it is the Lord that made the heavens." The whole Bible is merely the unfolding of that truth with which its first chapter so simply yet so sublimely opens.

II. This belief in God as the Creator and Preserver of all things applies in particular to man as the chiefest and best of God's works (Psalm viii.).

III. This faith in God as man's Creator and Preserver led the writers of these Psalms to trust their souls to Him as well as their bodies; led them to look to Him as their Saviour, not only from earthly troubles and dangers, but also from those spiritual troubles which are man's heaviest trials.

IV. There is yet a further growth which we can trace from this faith in God as the Creator and Preserver—I mean the belief of the psalmists in a life beyond the grave.

G. FORBES, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 94.

REFERENCE: cxxi. 1, 2.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 154.

Psalm cxxi., ver. 2.—"My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

THIS expression of dependence upon God is not merely a formal act of piety, but the utterance of a truth which is seen to be more profoundly true for all of us the more we think of it.

I. It is plain that in all man's great discoveries he only observes the energies of nature, which are not his own, but are really the energies of God; and in his inventions he follows up hints which are given him by nature itself, so that he is bound to acknowledge God in every step of his advancement. The law of man's development is an ever-closer union of the finite with the Infinite, and this is its true glory. It is, in a lower sense, the ever-advancing incarnation of the Word of His power and the "taking of manhood into God."

II. That which is true of outward and material things is also the law of our salvation from sin and death. Man works out his salvation by union with God, who "worketh in him to will and to do of His good pleasure." The finite gains the victory only by closest union with the infinite Spirit. The one all-embracing condition of salvation is faith in Christ; that is, union of heart, and soul, and mind with the Power which alone can, and which certainly will, carry us from this world of sin and death to everlasting life.

III. If you have taken hold of this Power, remember that it has also taken hold of you, and will hold you in its grasp for ever as it holds the stars in their places. It is a Power which can transform you into something Divine. It is the Power which converts carbon into the diamond, a little earth and gas into the cedar of Lebanon, an invisible germ into the most perfect form of beauty. And it is set on converting us into something far more glorious than these things: into sharers of His own glory for ever in the person of Christ.

E. WHITE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 149.

Psalm cxxi., ver. 3.—"He that keepeth thee will not slumber."

THERE are times of every man's life, moods of every man's mind, in which nothing is more acceptable than the remembrance of some of those fundamental truths of religion from which we often turn aside as elementary or commonplace. Such a truth, so certain, so fundamental, so comforting, is that of the never-failing providence of God, a truth, or rather a fact, which has been the unceasing support of all God's servants in every age, and on the belief of which depend all our happiness in life, all our hope in danger and difficulty, all our strength and consolation in times of suffering and distress.

I. The providence of God must be either minute and universal or nominal and nugatory. If God does anything, He must do all things. The very greatness of God, the difference between Him and His creatures in point of knowledge and power, is shown in nothing more infallibly than in this, that He is able to combine universal dominion with particular superintendence, the irresistible control of empires and of worlds with the most minute direction of individual interests, the tenderest concern for individual feeling. What then does this teach us? How shall we avail ourselves of the truth thus disclosed?

II. Let each one say to himself—it is not the language of self-exaltation—God careth for me. The Lord thinketh upon me. I am of value in the sight of God, not for what I am without Him, but for that of which He has made me capable, and for the sake of Him who bought me with His most precious blood. It was not by chance, but by the will and operation of God, that the time, and the place, and the circumstances of my being were all ordained.

III. Recollect that from the watchful eye of that Providence

which orders all things we cannot escape if we would. Either in love and tender compassion, or else (according to the fearful words of the prophet) with fury poured out, God *must* rule over us. It is not a matter of choice whether we will be under Him or whether we will be our own masters. His we are. "Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from Thy presence?"

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 164.

Psalm cxxi., ver. 8.—"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

I. IT was help, and only help, which the speaker looked for from God. And help is not that which dispenses with exertion on our part, but rather that which supposes such exertion. Helping a man is not doing everything for him and leaving him nothing to do for himself, but rather the assisting him in his efforts, making those efforts effectual when perhaps without that aid they would be insufficient and frustrated.

II. "Who made heaven and earth." This is turning creation to account. There is not an impress of power in the visible universe but is a message to the Christian, telling him not to be afraid.

III. "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved." In the first verse we have the psalmist leaning or waiting upon God; in the third we have his strength renewed through fresh assurance of Divine favour and support. Were there no more watchful eye upon our path than our own, we should often be in such slippery places that no effort might avail to keep ourselves from falling; but there is an eye upon us that is never closed.

IV. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Then there is a blessed company who share with me this unwearied protection, "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

V. "The Lord is thy Keeper." This indicates, indeed, the presence and activity of enemies, who, like wolves, may prowl about the flock, but indicates also the security of those within the fold. If we refuse to stay in the fold, and wilfully wander into the wilderness, we must expect to be harassed and torn; but God will never fail to keep us so long as we fail not to strive to keep ourselves.

VI. The last verse is a promise that we shall be kept in all our ways; that in all our business, in all our movements, amid

all the changes and chances of our mortal life, we shall evermore be defended by that ready help which issues from an eye that cannot close and an arm that cannot fail.

"Even for evermore." There is a "going out" from this world; there is a "coming in" to the next world. Our "going out" through the dark valley shall be under the guidance of that blessed Shepherd whose rod and whose staff shall never fail to comfort the believer; our "coming in" to the heavenly city shall be as heirs with that glorious Redeemer who must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2241.

Psalm cxxi.

THERE is an affinity between souls and hills, especially for those who have become acquainted with their own solemn depths and sublime heights. In man's earthly estate wonderful heights are laid low. He has descended from the eternal hills. Being away from his home and half a stranger to himself, the broken conformations of the outward world, the deep, dark, mist-shrouded valleys, the bold, aspiring, light-seeking mountains, deeply affect him. Man in trouble instinctively looks to the hills; he feels the attraction of the Fatherland, and knows there is help for him there.

I. "I will lift up mine eyes." Our eyes travel where our feet cannot climb, lay hold of what our hands cannot reach; but the eyes that the psalmist speaks of are the eyes of the soul, and the hills to which he looks are the hills of help for the soul.

II. The help of the hills is representative of the help of other heights. They receive whatever help they furnish. They stand for the "hill of the Lord," for the "Maker of heaven and earth." The Maker only can help that which is made.

III. From the hill of the Lord we receive help for the valley. The hill of the Lord is to the pilgrim who looks up what the compass is to the mariner, who finds his course by it through the troubled waters of the pathless sea.

IV. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." The clouds may shut out the light of the sky even by day, and under a cloudless sky the sun early leaves the valleys; and though over the hill-tops the light long lingers, and the day seems loath to depart, the night closes in: but from Mount Zion the light is never withdrawn.

V. The habit of looking up will teach us: (1) to understand

the use of trouble in this valley; (2) that we are to be withdrawn from the earthly valley.

W. PULSFORD, *Trinity Church Sermons*, p. 50.

REFERENCES: cxxi.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 24; M. R. Vincent, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 265; *Expository Sermons and Outlines on the Old Testament*, p. 242.

Psalm cxxii., ver. 1.—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

I. WHY was David so glad? why did his heart beat with a thrill of pleasure at the summons to enter God's house? Because David was a man who lived in the faith and fear of God; because from a child he had set God always before him, and had been accustomed to see God's hand in all that befell him; because he was from his heart convinced that in God he lived, and moved, and had his being. He longed to acknowledge the lovingkindness of the Lord; and that acknowledgment, he felt, he could nowhere make so solemnly and so fitly as in the courts of God's house.

II. David's joy is set forth in the Scriptures as an example of the right spirit in which we ought to approach the public worship of our Maker: in a spirit of holy gladness. The service which God requires of us is the service of our hearts. The mere coming into His courts on Sunday is nothing—nay, is worse than nothing: is a mockery—unless we come gladly, cheerfully, willingly, of our own free desire, and not from compulsion or for form's sake.

III. What has God done for David that He has not done for us as well? The Lord is everything to us that He was to David: our strength, our strong rock, our defence, our Saviour, our might, our buckler, the horn also of our salvation, and our refuge. The real stumbling-block is that we are not sufficiently alive to God's great goodness; that we do not set Him, as David did, continually before our face; that we set other things before us in His stead: our farm, our merchandise, our family cares, our pleasures, our schemes for getting on in the world. One thing is needful. Try to live with the thought of God more continually present to your minds. Cultivate a sense of His exceeding love. If we do this, we shall be glad, unfeignedly glad, when they say, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 70.

THE house of the Lord suggests:—

I. Thoughts of the Lord Himself. A gladdening thought this to David, and to every man who knows God as Jesus Christ teaches His disciples to know the Father.

II. Thoughts of the various glorious manifestations of God. These manifestations are calculated to awaken joy.

III. Thoughts of the mercies of the Lord, those mercies of which we personally have been the recipients.

IV. Thoughts of the exercises and the acts of worship.

V. The thought of meeting God as God is not found elsewhere.

VI. The thought of receiving special blessings from God, for in these places, or of them, God has said, "I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

VII. Thoughts suggested by the prospect of the communion of saints.

VIII. The thought of enjoying a privilege in the performance of a duty.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 1st series, No. 5.

REFERENCES: cxxii. 1.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 352; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxi., p. 144; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p 250; J. G. Butler, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 366; A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 273; J. F. Haynes *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 190.

Psalm cxxii., ver. 2.—"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

THE Psalm from which this verse is taken was probably written by a pilgrim to Jerusalem at some time previous to the Babylonish captivity. On the one hand, it is clear that the house of the Lord, the ancient Temple, was still standing; on the other, the reference to the house of David and the anxious prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, its walls, its palaces, seem to point to a later time than that of David.

I. One thing which would have struck a pilgrim to Jerusalem who should approach the city, as was natural, from its north-eastern side, would be its beauty. In the eyes of a religious pilgrim the physical beauty of Jerusalem must have suggested and blended with beauty of the highest order. The beauty of the world of spirit imparts to the world of sense a subtle lustre which of itself it could never possess.

II. Jerusalem was the centre of the religious and national life of Israel. Its greatest distinction was that the Temple lay within its walls. No other title to glory and distinction in

these ancient days could compete with this place where God did choose to put His name.

III. A third characteristic of Jerusalem was its unworldliness. (1) This appears partly in its very situation. Jerusalem was not on the sea or on a navigable river. Isaiah rejoiced in "Zion, the city of our solemnities, as a quiet habitation, wherein shall no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship, pass by." In his eyes its religious character as well as its security are ensured by its seclusion from the great highways of the world of his day. (2) This characteristic may be further illustrated by the smallness of Jerusalem. No large capital could have existed in such a situation. In point of area Jerusalem would ill compare with our larger London parishes, Marylebone or Islington. Yet no city in the world has so profoundly influenced the highest life of millions of the human race as has that little highland town in a remote province of the empire of Turkey.

IV. Once more, as the centuries went on, Jerusalem became yet dearer to the heart of Israel by misfortune. Of all that is most beautiful in life sorrow is the last consecration. Undoubtedly the author of our Psalm would already have seen in Jerusalem a pathos and a dignity which so often come with suffering, and those who used this Psalm in later ages would have felt increasingly this element of the attraction of the holy city.

V. The Jerusalem of Christian thought is no longer only or mainly the "city of David." It is first of all the visible and universal Church of Christ. And it suggests another city, a true haven of peace, into which all those true children of Zion who are joyful in their King will one day be received.

H. P. Liddon, *Family Churchman*, Aug. 25th, 1886 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 113).

References: cxxii. 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 1; E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 389. cxxii. 6.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 425. cxxii. 6, 7.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 49. cxxii. 7-9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 254. cxxii. 8.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 230. cxxii. 9.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 233. cxxii.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 110; W. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 56; S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 48.

Psalm cxxiii., ver. 2 (Prayer-book version).—"Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us."

I. Wherever we see a master with a family of servants, we

see a living parable of Almighty God and His Church; and out of their duties and behaviour to one another we may obtain much good instruction regarding our own behaviour towards Him. (1) St. Paul says, "Servants, be subject to your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling;" and do we not know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom, and that the very description of the temper which suits the Gospel is to have grace whereby to serve God in reverence and godly fear? (2) St. Paul bids servants be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart; that is, that in setting about their work they should simply have an eye to their masters service, and not rather to their own convenience and pleasure: and this, again, is the very thing so much commended in Christian people, that they should serve God in simplicity and godly sincerity. (3) The same Apostle adds that what we do for our masters should be done not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; that is, we are not to have one way of doing our work when they are in sight and another when they are out of sight: and this, again, is like the care which becomes all Christians to make their conduct agree with their prayers, their weekdays with their Sundays, their ordinary behaviour with their direct service of their Lord. (4) Whereas all manner of servants among men naturally and justly look onward to the time of receiving their wages, as a hireling, according to Job's saying, seeketh the reward of his work, so we are instructed to look on to the recompense of our eternal reward, knowing, as St. Paul goes on, that "whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

II. All the qualities of a good servant are summed up in one word: fidelity; or, as it is is described by the psalmist in the text, "his eyes wait upon the hand of his master." So the faithful and dutiful Christian, he who has true love and thankfulness to the Father and God of his whole life, does not wait for express commands, but does what he sincerely thinks his Maker will be pleased with. Such simple, unwearied obedience, not asking questions, but performing duties—this is what God delights to honour.

J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year, Sundays after Trinity, Thirteenth to End*, p. 1.

References: cxxiii. 2.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 80. cxxiii. —S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 68. cxxiv. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1696. cxxiv.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 86. cxxv. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1450. cxxv. 2.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., No. 191. cxxv.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 119.

Psalm cxxvi., ver. 2.—"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

THE Jews, when, by God's mercy, they were once more settled in the land of promise, gave way to the same feelings of which we are conscious when we are excited by pleasure, by prosperity, by unexpected success. Either mirth must be altogether forbidden to Christians, or it must be regulated by the rules of Christ's Gospel, like every other part of our daily lives.

I. Every tendency, and feeling, and desire of which we are conscious was implanted in us by God for some wise and good purpose. The mere fact that our mouth can be filled with laughter seems to prove that God designed us to use the power for good ends. Those ends, no doubt, are such as these: the relaxation and refreshment of the mind after labour or sorrow, or other severe tension; the encouragement of vigorous work by the pleasure attaching to success; the promotion of that spirit of cordial fellowship and goodwill which may be ennobled and sanctified into brotherly kindness and Christian charity. In the Old Testament mirth and laughter are frequently recognised and sanctioned, not in the passage before us only, but in many other places also. And hence we do not hesitate to believe that they are in accordance with God's will; and therefore our duty as His children and servants is to guard them from evil, just like every other gift, or faculty, or advantage which He has bestowed upon us.

II. But it is plain that the abuses to which they are liable are very numerous. Mirth may intrude into times and places from which it should be excluded; it may degenerate into coarseness, into unkind sarcasm and satire, into irreverence, into mere selfish indulgence and excess. But the habit of mind which is especially the degradation of that cheerfulness permitted by God and the result of its unrestrained enjoyment is undoubtedly frivolity. He who is frivolous regards everything in a ludicrous or trifling aspect, whether it is some high effort of the intellect, some sublime truth or noble action, or the very revelations of Christ's Gospel. Such is not the condition of him who remembers the duties which he owes to the kind and loving Father who endowed us with the capacity of enjoyment, who knows that his first duty is to serve God and sacrifice his own inclinations, and so accepts laughter and cheerfulness as merciful recreations to the real work of life.

BISHOP COTTON, *Marlborough Sermons*, p. 285.

REFERENCES: cxxvi. 3.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 161, cxxvi. 5.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 297.

Psalm cxxvi., vers. 5, 6.—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," etc.

I. Notice the significance of the emblem here employed. Husbandry is the oldest, simplest, and most heaven-ordained labour of man. It keeps man in his place as a servant, and exercises patience, obedience, and faith. (1) It is a work of homely, wholesome, patient labour. A man can only get from the soil in the proportion in which he puts into it. (2) Submission. God has made a law, "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread." God makes man work in submission to His laws for his daily sustenance. (3) Faith. All husbandry is of faith. The seed is trusted to the bosom of nature. Man *must* cast the care of it on Him who bears the burden of nature, gives security for all her deposits, and is the Trustee of her every hope.

II. The tearful sowing. Is there a needs-must-be for this, and out of what conditions does it spring? (1) Consider the nature of the seed we sow—precious seed, seed which has cost us much, has cost Christ much, how precious is known only to ourselves and God. The seed we sow in human hearts is just the life-bread of our own souls. We sow in tears, because of the preciousness of the seed we are sowing, every grain of it a trophy and the memorial of a pain. (2) The conditions of the field which we cultivate. Every soul is a veiled sanctuary, a shrine impenetrable, to every other soul. No will of ours can lift the curtain, or break the silence, or search the hidden depths. (3) The seed we sow on human hearts, like seed sown on the waters, vanishes from sight and touch; precious as it was, it is gone from us: our effort can help it no more. We have committed it to One who can watch it, but "whose ways are not as our ways, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts." (4) The most precious culture is that which we bestow on the seed-field of our own spirits, and every seed that is planted must be wet with tears ere it germinates there.

III. The joyful reaping. The compensation for the sowing rests on these facts: (1) Every word and work that comes forth from us, born of the inward life, has not only our life, but God's life, in it, a portion of the life which is eternal in it; it cannot, it shall not, die. (2) God establishes this law of tearful sowing just that He may lead us to this fruitful and victorious union with Himself. (3) We are not isolated in this work. We belong to an advancing army; we fight in a field of victory; we serve a Master who must push His

triumphs until He has fulfilled the largest purpose of His love. (4) We thus realise the full communion with the Saviour; and that is the highest joy of a spirit—"the joy which the world giveth not and taketh not away."

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. 2.

I. THE first lesson suggested to us here is that we are often called to labour in which we have little joy.

II. The second lesson is that God rewards us according to our fidelity, and not according to our gladness.

III. Our text speaks not only of sheaves for the sowing, but of rejoicing for the tears. The very tears are a seed that shall have a joyful springing; the sorrow shall return again in joy.

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 30.

REFERENCE: cxxvi. 5, 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 167.

Psalm cxxvi., ver. 6.—"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

I. THIS text, taken in its largest significance, is to be classed with those passages of Scripture which speak of the reward of good works, and use that reward as a motive to their performance. If, then, it be lawful to speak of reward, we may certainly speak of the husbandman who "goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed," as "coming again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." It will frequently happen that we have no means of ascertaining that any beneficial results have been produced by our most earnest and disinterested labours; and it is quite possible that no such results have followed, and that they never will follow. And yet even in this extreme case you can only suppose that the retributions of eternity will abundantly prove the statements of our text. To every action will be allotted a recompense, to every sacrifice a reward.

II. The text is a promise which is admirably fitted for preserving us against becoming weary in well-doing. It meets that feeling of despondency which those who labour for God are often tempted to entertain. There must be no such thing as the giving up in despair because hitherto we seem to have been toiling in vain. We cannot tell that it has been in vain. We are rather bound to believe that it has not been in vain. The text should lead us in every case where there seems no result from our labours to examine whether we have faithfully com-

plied with its precept—whether there has been diligence in sowing the seed, and whether it has been "precious seed" we have sown.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2469.

REFERENCES: **cxxvi. 6.**—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 186; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 867; A. C. Price, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 206. cxxvi. 7.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 86; W. Baird, *The Hallowing of our Common Life*, p. 31. cxxvi.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 132; M. R. Vincent, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 283; M. Nicholson, *Communion with Heaven*, p. 152.

Psalm cxxvii., ver. 1.—"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

THERE is progress in life, there is progress in history, because the Lord is building, working, and watching with man; and man is learning—slowly, alas! and by stages that seem imperceptible each moment, visible only over a long range of generations—that the one way of life, the one fountain of blessing, is the taming of his self-will to build, and watch, and work with God.

I. The great concern of man's life on earth is the discovery and establishment of a harmony between himself and God. The concord of man's thought and activity with God's is the secret upon earth of all true, real, and abiding work.

II. Man, we say familiarly, is the architect of his own fortune. It is a poor limitation; he is the architect of his own character and his own destiny. By the house of life I mean those principles and habits of moral judgment and action which are the true house of the soul, wherein it dwells and from which it comes forth to work benignly or malignly for itself and mankind. Of that house man is the architect, not God; that house he is daily building, and that building will abide and be the home or the prison of the soul throughout eternity.

III. If you would build wisely, look to the foundations. Christ is the one Rock on which the house of life must rest if it is to escape the floods and fires by which all that is perishable must perish, and be lifted on high among the imperishable things through eternity. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" is the vital question for every one of us.

IV. And build daily in conscious, blessed dependence on the co-operation of a higher hand. There is One working with you,

working in you, who alone can make your building of the house of life a large and lasting success.

J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 103.

References: cxxvii. 1.—C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 1. cxxvii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 12. cxxvii. 3.—W. Braden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 369. cxxvii.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 155.

Psalm cxxvii., ver. 2.—"So He giveth His beloved sleep."

We take the "sleep" in our text as denoting death, and confine ourselves to an illustration of the passage under this one point of view. Here we have an idea which it would be well to work out in detail. God values death. He must value that which He reserves for the objects of His love. There are two great reasons to be given why death should be regarded as a gift to the believer, and why, therefore, as being a gift, it should be called precious or valuable in God's sight.

I. Regard the believer as testifying to the finished work of Christ. What evidence of the complete success of the scheme of redemption can exceed or equal that which is furnished by the death of God's saints? That which they could never have learned from natural theology the Gospel has taught them: they have learned how to die. Thus the Gospel is put, as it were, to the greatest possible trial; and the trial does but issue in full evidence of its sufficiency.

II. Regard the believer as admitted in and through death into final security. Having fought the good fight and kept the faith dying as well as living, the righteous are henceforward placed beyond the reach of danger. Nothing can put their salvation in peril. If they be not crowned till the morning of resurrection, a crown is laid up for them which "no thief can rifle and no moth corrupt." The death is a precious gift because the life is perilous; and God bestows a benefit on His people when He has gathered them into the separate state, because then they can be no more tempted to the forsaking of His law, no more exposed to the assaults of the Evil One, no more challenged to a battle in which, if victory be glorious, there is all the risk of a shameful defeat.

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1666.

References: cxxvii. 3.—F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 425. cxxvii. 3-5.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 323. cxxvii. 4.—A. P. Stanley, *Good Words*, 1877, p. 82; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 100. cxxvii. 13.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 136. cxxviii. 5.—W. M.

Statham, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 360. cxxviii.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 177. cxxix. 8.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 29. cxxix.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 199.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 1 (Prayer-book version).—"Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice."

I. That deep was not merely the deep of affliction. You may see men with every comfort which wealth and home can give who are tormented day and night in that deep pit in the midst of all their prosperity, calling for a drop of water to cool their tongue and finding none. That deep pit is a far worse place, an utterly bad place, and yet it may be good for a man to have fallen into it; and strangely enough, if he do fall in, the lower he sinks in it the better for him at last. There is another strange contradiction in that pit, which David found: that though it was a bottomless pit, the deeper he sank in it the more likely he was to find his feet set on a rock; the further down in the nethermost hell he was the nearer he was to being delivered from the nethermost hell.

II. The fire of that pit hardens a man and softens him at the same time; and he comes out of it hardened to the hardness of which it is written, "Do thou endure hardness, like a good soldier of Jesus Christ," yet softened to that softness of which it is written, "Be ye tender-hearted, compassionate, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

III. How shall we learn this? How shall the bottomless pit, if we fall into it, be but a pathway to the everlasting Rock? David tells us: "Out of the deep have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." He was face to face with God, alone, in utter weakness, in utter nakedness of soul. He cried to God Himself. There was the lesson. God took him up and cast him down; and there he sat alone, astonished and confounded, like Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, when she sat alone upon the parching rock. But it was told David what Rizpah had done. And it is told to One greater than David, even to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, what the poor soul does when it sits alone in its despair. It shall be with that poor soul as it was with Moses when he went up alone into the mount of God and fasted forty days and forty nights, amid the earthquake, and the thunderstorm, and the rocks which melted before the Lord. "And, behold, when it was past, he talked face to face with God, as a man talketh with his friend;" and his countenance shone with heavenly light when he came down triumphant out of the mount of God.

C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 68.

Reference: cxxx. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 83.

Psalm CXXX., vers. 1, 2.—"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord," etc.

THERE are deep soul-utterances here: there are the trouble and the darkness that often precede or accompany the coming to life again of the soul; there are the cries of pain and anguish which usher back the soul from the world of outer darkness to the blessed light.

I. To the majority there comes a time of awakening. The time of awakening is a critical time; it is a period of jeopardy to the soul. There are mistakes sometimes made which, like wrong turnings on a road, bring us to unforeseen issues. There is the danger of mistaking a first fervour for a completed conversion; there is the danger of mistaking flowing tears for true repentance, dissatisfaction with self for deep contrition, fear of earthly consequences for hatred of sin.

II. But if there be this abounding weakness of human nature shown in the course of the awakening soul, far more is the abounding strength of God here made manifest, the strength of Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. God never yet deserted a soul in whom, however faintly, true penitence was shown. Christ's blood is sufficient; the aid of the Holy Ghost is all-powerful. God goes out to meet the soul; He clothes, adorns, renews, and welcomes back that soul, telling it of Himself in language which as time goes on He teaches it to interpret and understand more and more fully.

III. Only let us not resist His grace; let us seek it, be on the watch for it, pray for it. "Sorrow may endure for a night"—yea, even for a long night—"but joy cometh in the morning," the longer morning of an unending life of peace.

BISHOP E. R. WILBERFORCE, *The Awaking Soul*, p. 1.

Psalm CXXX., vers. 1, 2, 7.

I. THE first thing that occurs to us in glancing over the Psalms is the great variety of circumstances under which they seem to have been composed. These circumstances embrace the whole range of human life, its joys and its sorrows, its successes and its reverses; while the emotions which they express include all the corresponding feelings of the human heart.

II. Another striking feature is their unity, their agreement or oneness. (1) Manifold as they are, they all speak to one Person: God. All meet in Him as the one centre towards which they are directed. (2) In their various utterances to

God there is the same spirit; the same principle seems to dictate each. They all speak the language of faith in God.

III. If you search through the Psalms, you will find this faith in God unfolding itself into: (1) faith in God as the Creator and Preserver of the world; (2) faith in God as the living King and Ruler of men; (3) faith in God as the righteous Judge; (4) faith in God as having compassion upon all who suffer; (5) faith in God as One who will not reject the penitent.

G. Forbes, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 80.

References: cxxx. 1-3.—M. R. Vincent, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 149. cxxx. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 84.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 3.—"If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

We have here the second stage in the journey of the soul from the abyss to God.

I. Consider the state itself. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (1) There has been distinct progress here, yet the eyes are still dim with past slumber; the heart is still hardened by former sin; the vision is not clear. The soul is beginning to understand that to make any real progress it must know two things alone at first: itself and its wants, Christ and His redeeming blood; yet it cannot now shut all else out. Other men are still included in its view—others, with their measure of guilt. The eyes are but opening to spiritual things; the soul is not yet alone with God. (2) Mark how this verse discloses all the conflict that rages in the soul. It is as though the shipwrecked man had been thrown upon a rock, bruised, stunned, bewildered; as if he could just hold on there, and no more; as if the roar of the angry waters was still in his ear; nay, as if he saw those waters almost sweeping up to him again, almost enfolding him in their fearsome embrace once more, and yet was powerless to move: only in his heart there is a reaching out to One who alone is powerful to save.

II. Consider the peculiar dangers of this time: (1) despair; (2) a want of thoroughness and reality; (3) impatience; (4) the haunting of old temptations.

III. This stage is also one of hope, and one on which there rests an especial blessing from our God. If Satan be busy round us then, yet is not the heaven opened above us? Is not One watching us who Himself once suffered in the attack of the thronging temptations? He will never mark iniquities if

you deal truly and honestly with Him. Yes, it is a time of hope, of joy in the presence of God, when the repentant sinner seeks the homeward way.

BISHOP E. R. WILBERFORCE, *The Awaking Soul*, p. 16.

REFERENCE: cxxx. 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 84.

Psalm cxxx., vers. 3, 4 (Prayer-book version).—"If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss: O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee: therefore shalt Thou be feared."

I. IT is when the sinner feels his weakness and his utter inability to deliver himself from the clinging guilt of the past, to shake off by the mere exercise of his will the evil habits and unruly tempers that have got strong hold over him, and to keep himself free from falls for the time to come, that the concluding words of the text come home to him with their full power: "There is mercy with Thee; *therefore* shalt Thou be feared." If there were no mercy, there would be little fear. Men would grow reckless, desperate. All experience, the experience of all ages and countries, has shown this. Where mercy is never shown, crimes multiply; men grow bolder, take their chance more recklessly, and meet their fate more doggedly, than when there is an occasional pardon and reprieve.

II. If God were extreme to mark what is done amiss, there would be no hope for any of us. But He has a prerogative of mercy, which He exercises in favour of those whom He deems worthy of it. Because, therefore, He holds the prerogative of mercy, let us fear Him—fear lest we should render ourselves unworthy of it; fear lest we should compel Him to withhold it; fear lest we should miss it.

F. E. PAGET, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 28.

I. As St. Paul urged the goodness of God as a motive not, as some might expect, for hope and confidence, but for repentance—"The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"—so here the same doctrine is taught us by the Holy Spirit; because God is merciful, therefore we ought to fear Him. We might have expected that the psalmist would have said, There is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be trusted. There is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be loved and adored: and so of course it might; nevertheless the word is, "Therefore shalt Thou be feared," or "that Thou mayest be feared."

II. We should all endeavour more and more to feel and acknowledge our own deficiencies, our sins, negligences, and

ignorances, and then to set in earnest about leading a new life, because to go on as we have been, without trying to grow better, may indeed satisfy other people and ourselves too; but still the awful question remains whether we are indeed such as our Lord, Master, and Redeemer will acknowledge as His in the day when He makes up His jewels.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 250.

REFERENCE: cxxx. 3, 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 367.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 4.—"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."

SURELY it is a time known to most of us when we have, in our self-abasement, felt the mercy of God to be the sole warrant for our return to Him; and with that feeling there have come light and hope. There is the birth of a new love in the heart; and before it all the old loves pale, and finally die out. God has met the returning soul half-way, and has whispered His pardon in its ear. It is one of the very few times in the spiritual life when something of its actual progress is made known to the awakening soul; it has got within the sure mercies of God, and it cannot but feel the touch of the embrace of God. If to us Christ has made known His mercy, and has broken up our hearts with its penetrating sweetness, then it behoves us to think how we may guard this treasure so that none shall ever snatch it from us, so that in life it may be our stay, in death it may be our comfort, and in the judgment it may be our shield.

I. First, let us be careful that we have the reality, and no mere counterfeit, invented by the craft of a juggling Satan. If the psalmist's words are to be truth for us, we must be careful to avoid putting any confidence in mere feeling. This would be to make the soul a sport for the winds, a prey to deceit; no sense of uplifting must be alone trusted to, any more than any mere sense of depression need be feared.

II. The half-repentant soul is in deeper danger almost than the soul which has never yet awakened; half-repentance lulls the soul to sleep even while it sins: it is the devil's way of giving an anodyne whilst he is destroying the soul for ever. The half-repentant soul has never made the one great decision between God and sin; it seeks to know God and yet bow down in the house of Rimmon; it would serve God and mammon.

III. Let us be most especially upon our guard as to any shallow half-heartedness in repentance because of the present feeling

of relief that a contemplation of God's mercy brings. Let us never be content till in the will, the actions, the temper, the desires, in short till in the life, the expression of thankfulness for that forgiveness be seen, till we know repentance is growing with our life.

BISHOP E. R. WILBERFORCE, *The Awaking Soul*, p. 32.

I. THERE must be something peculiar about God's forgiveness that it leads to fear. How is it that, while the parents who constantly forgive are not feared, God, with whom is forgiveness, is? Why is it that forgiveness does not in His case, as in theirs, breed insolent presumption? What is that strange and potent element in Divine forgiveness which makes the forgiven fear, making me more afraid to sin beside the Cross of Calvary, with its quiet, pale, dead, bleeding burden, than if I stood at the foot of Sinai, amid the thunders, lightnings, and trumpet-peals that made Moses himself exceedingly fear and quake?

II. Let me explain those peculiar characters in the forgiveness of God which breed fear, not presumption, in the forgiven. (1) The manner of the forgiveness sets forth the holiness of God and the evils of sin in the strongest light. It is by an altar and through a victim that there is forgiveness with God; pardon flows to men in a stream of blood. But here the altar is a cross, and its Victim is the Son of the Highest. There is forgiveness, but after a fashion that should teach us to fear, and in life's lightest hours to join trembling with our mirth. If God did not spare His only-begotten and well-beloved Son when He took our sins on Him, how shall He spare those who prefer their sins to their Saviour, neglecting this great salvation? (2) The manner of forgiveness sets forth not only God's hatred of sin, but His love to sinners, in the strongest light. It costs man nothing to forgive, but it cost God His Son. How must He have loved you for whom He gave a Son so loved! and how will the love this breeds in you make you fear to dishonour or displease One who has so loved you, securing your forgiveness on such an immovable foundation and at so great a price!

T. GUTHRIE, *Speaking to the Heart*, p. 20.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 4 (with Psalm lxxxv., ver. 8).—"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. But let them not turn again to folly."

I. THE particle "but" in these verses indicates the contrast of one truth to another. In Psalm cxxx. 4 the contrast is between

Divine holiness, the strictness of Divine justice, and the amplitude and freedom of Divine grace.

II. Psalm lxxxv. 8. When God speaks peace, He will accompany it with solemn warning, not without good cause and need. The fear of apostasy is set before believers, and is one of the means by which God creates and maintains that holy caution, self-distrust, and confiding trust in Him by which His people are kept from apostasy and, short of apostasy, from return to folly. There is forgiveness with Him, but it is that He may be feared.

III. With these two "buts," what is left: (1) for despair; (2) for presumption?

J. DUNCAN, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 276.

REFERENCES: cxxx. 4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 80, and vol. xii., p. 84. cxxx. 5.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 27.

Psalm cxxx., vers. 5, 6.—"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope," etc.

IN Dr. Kay's translation of the Psalms, these verses are rendered thus:—

> "I waited for the Lord; my soul waited,
> And for His word I looked earnestly."

Mark that past tense, and now the transition:—

> "My soul is to the Lord,
> More than sentries for the morning, than sentries for the morning."

Here are two more steps marked out upon the homeward way: the past waiting and the present result of that waiting. The waiting may have been very painful, very long, very discouraging at times; but it was persevered in, and the earnest watch was kept. Mark the result: the turning of the soul to the Lord; completed conversion. Never did tired sentinel look more eagerly for the first ray of morning light than does that soul look for the signs of the presence of God with it.

I. It is a state of armed expectation, then, that is here described; one that is full of a hope based on past favours; one, however, that it needs much manhood to maintain, much fortitude to endure; one that has its own peculiar trials, and yet one that has its own uplifting helps. Most souls who know aught of Christ and His wealth of love, aught of sin and its misery, are somewhere about the region here described by the psalmist.

II Consider some of the dangers of the state before us. (1) The time which we are considering is especially a time for building up the spiritual house, though now, as of old, the sword must be in one hand while the trowel is in the other. Guard at this stage against an emotional form of Christianity, against any mere hysterical approaches to Christ. (2) We should mistrust mere quiet, at least if that quiet mean only the absence of temptation. This is an armed wakeful quiet, if quiet it be. (3) Never let us be cast down by mere temptation, so long as, by God's help, we are able to resist the temptation; it will humble us to be tempted: that is good; it will warn us: that is helpful; it will teach us to rely only on Christ: that is what we want to learn. (4) Beware of spiritual idleness at this stage.

III. Notice some of the marks whereby we may know whether we have reached this stage of the spiritual life or no. (1) We shall have cut ourselves adrift from all old associations with sin. (2) There will be an abiding sorrow for sin, which will have an increasing gentleness of manner as one of its chief characteristics. (3) There will be a growing love of the word of God. (4) The growth of patience. The spiritual life is full of sweetest surprises to the patient looker-out on God; the eye grows to be instructed where to look for signs of His presence and to see them where others cannot, just as experienced mountaineers ever look to the westward hills for the reflection of the first faint flush of dawn, while tyros are still gazing up at the eastern hills, which only hinder signs. Let us be patient in our armed watch, and the morning will come. "My soul is to the Lord, more than sentries for the morning."

BISHOP E. R. WILBERFORCE, *The Awaking Soul*, p. 48.

REFERENCE: cxxx. 5, 6.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 340.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 6.—"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."

No one can read the Psalms and doubt that David knew and loved the Second Advent. And therefore I am inclined to believe that it was of this he spoke in the text.

I. Who but a very bad man thinks of the morning with any other than a happy feeling? The man of ardent enterprise chafes at the hindrances of the darkness, and longs for the morning. The timid child is afraid of the loneliness, and wishes it were day. The weary sentry treads his rounds, and listens for the

early notes that herald his release. The solitary mourner wails that the night is long. The expectant bride looks out upon the horizon, and sighs for the dawn. And just so it is with the whole Church; all, with one consent, watch for the morning. That morning shall roll back the uncertainties and the hindrances, the terrors and the regrets, the sins and the sufferings, of the old, and let in a new existence.

II. There are four things which especially go to make up that one little, comprehensive command "Watch." (1) Whoever would watch for Christ must have some intelligent conception of the nature of His coming. (2) To watch for the Second Advent is to be always regarding it as David did, and Peter: as the great antidote and cure for all present evil. (3) You must place the thought of the Second Advent as the crown of all your happiness. It will be like the bloom of the morning upon the mountain-top. (4) If you would watch for Christ, all life must be in harmony with the watch. The light must be in that heart that looks for light.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 12th series, p. 189.

I. WHAT is the true idea of the phrase "waiting upon God"? "Waiting" expresses a state or habit which is the result of a combination of desire, expectation, and patient submission. "Waiting on God" is thus the patient expectation of results which God has promised to secure, results which are in themselves desirable, and which God has given us reason to believe will be realised. It implies the exercise of self-control, a meek acquiescence in the Divine arrangements, a confident assurance that God will do what He has promised and show Himself in full accordance with all that He has revealed Himself to be.

II. As practically exemplifying this Divine principle, (1) we may take the case of a Christian man engaged in the business of life. Here waiting upon God will be exhibited not in the neglect of means or in any fanatical expectation that God will send down success apart from diligent and wise endeavours on the part of the individual to secure it, but in the pious, devout, and patient expectation of God's blessing to give effect to exertion wisely and perseveringly put forth. (2) The same principle applies to our spiritual business. We are to use the means; and when we have done what God has commanded us to do, true piety teaches us to wait on Him for that grace without which no effort of ours after spiritual attainment will succeed. (3) Take the case of a Christian man under the

discipline of affliction. He who has learned to "wait" commits himself to God, assured that He will not afflict His people willingly or lay on them more than they are able to bear, but, in the infinitude of His love, wisdom, and power, will make all things work together for good to those that love Him and are the called according to His purpose.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 62.
(see also *Good Words*, 1861, p. 191).

REFERENCE: cxxx. 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 84.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 7.—"With Him is plenteous redemption."

I. THIS redemption cancels all sin. God brings a plenteous redemption from the sin of the past and from the sin which, through the infirmity of our flesh, will surely come; from the sin we can remember and from that which we sinned but never knew; from bold transgressions and from those which struggled timorously, yet persistently, through the light of conscience, into birth; from the first sin which struck with strange pain our childish heart and from the last which will shadow our dying bed and then sink into oblivion, "whilst that we withal escape."

II. This redemption satisfies all law. The universe is full of law; it has never been invaded by chaos; it has never been ruled by chance. We are born into a world which is "established that it cannot be moved." There is a moral fixedness corresponding with, although transcending, all the regularities of nature. Our God is "not the Author of confusion, but of order;" in the plenteous redemption He brings to us, He makes void no law. His "grace reigns, but *through righteousness*." And no redemption can be called plenteous that does not satisfy law, because law is truth; moral law is the highest kind of truth: it is the transcript and expression of the Divine nature, and unless that nature can change, the law cannot change.

III. This redemption is deliverance for the whole man. As the whole human being sinks and withers under sin, so the whole rises and flourishes again in Christ.

IV. This redemption lasts through all time. "For ever" is the last and highest inscription written on it, and it sheds down a wondrous light on all its other qualities.

A. RALEIGH, *Sermon*, preached April 11th, 1860.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 7.—"Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

I. THE soul has been led upward by degrees, till it now seems

almost lost in the idea of the "plenteous redemption." One figure alone stands out distinct and clear; namely, the figure of the great Redeemer. All else is merged in the idea of the redemption.

II. The dangers of this state are: (1) lukewarmness; (2) unconscious hypocrisy, or self deceit; (3) familiarity with things spiritual rather than deep love for Jesus Christ.

III. What are the safeguards? Let the text answer. Like some golden thread woven in throughout the full length of a cloth, mercy and hope have gone hand in hand as yet; now the Holy Ghost speaks further of a "plenteous redemption." These three will fortify the soul that possesses them against attacks from without or betrayal from within.

IV. One of the outward marks which will help us to decide if we are accepted with God is our attitude to others. If we are constantly judging others, we have not got into that precious redemption ourselves yet. If our souls are "to the Lord," we shall strengthen others, we shall bring others to Christ. (1) Our reality in prayer will bring many to Christ. (2) We preach Christ by our behaviour. (3) We may bring others to Christ by our silence, by that government of the tongue which issues in a silence that is as "a loud cry in the ear of God." At this stage we must watch the tongue. Men on Alpine heights must often speak in whispers, lest they bring down the avalanche.

BISHOP E. R. WILBERFORCE, *The Awaking Soul*, p. 67.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 7.—"With the Lord there is plenteous redemption."

WE may conclude from these words:—

I. That the redemption purchased by the Saviour's death is ample and unlimited. It is the plain sense of Holy Scripture that Jesus shed His blood for Jew and Gentile, for bond and free; that by His death He put all into such a state that they *may*, if they *will*, come unto Him and be saved.

II. The redemption cannot be exhausted; provision has been made for each one of us. "Plenteous redemption" has been provided for each one of us; but the question for us to ask ourselves is this: Have we taken the needful steps for securing it?

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 278.

REFERENCES: cxxx. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 351; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 367; W. Baird, *The Hallowing of our Common Life*, p. 47. cxxx. 7, 8.—*Clergyman's Magazine* vol. xii., p. 84.

Psalm cxxx., ver. 8.—"And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

I. THESE words speak to us, first, of a Person. Do we know that Person? We are all well acquainted with His history; we believe it, no doubt: but does that faith colour our lives and shape our deeds? That is the question. Is the soul, in its separate individuality, reaching out to a personal God, whom even now it can touch by virtue of a sacramental union, and to whom it can even now speak in prayer and be certain of an audience?

II. How careful our blessed Lord is to teach us the truth; how often that tremendous "I am" confronts us at the very outset of much of His teaching; and in His one person all truth is seen to be summed up. He teaches us no doctrine about Himself. From first to last, His teaching is Himself; He is the expression of all He taught. From the first "I am" far away back in the pages of the old world history down to the "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," of the book of Revelation, it is so.

III. Redemption implies both the bringing back by One who shed His blood for us, and it implies as well the victory of One who is our King. In Christianity we are led through obedience to the kingdom, through the sufferings to the crown. If Christ be King, He calls for our personal surrender; if Christ be the Redeemer, He calls to us to come to Him for cleansing: but as He Himself is truth, He looks for reality in all our approaches to Him. Let us strive to know our God by personal access to Him, and knowing Him, strive to serve Him ever better. Let us labour on towards the goal, till we learn to know Him perfectly, who can alone "redeem Israel from all his iniquities," who alone is "King of kings and Lord of lords."

BISHOP E. R. WILBERFORCE, *The Awaking Soul*, p. 88.

Psalm cxxx.

THIS Psalm gives us what we may call the ascent of the soul from the depths to the heights.

I. We have the cry from the depths. The depths which the psalmist means are those into which the spirit feels itself going down, sick and giddy, when there comes the thought," I am a sinful man, O Lord, in the presence of Thy great purity." Out of these depths does he cry to God. (1) The depths are the place for us all. (2) Unless you have cried to God out of these depths, you have never cried to Him at all. (3) You want nothing more than a cry to draw you from the pit.

II. We have, next, a dark fear and a bright assurance (vers. 3 4).

These two halves represent the struggle in the man's mind. They are like a sky one half of which is piled with thunder-clouds and the other serenely blue. (1) To "mark" iniquities is to impute them to us. Here we have expressed the profound sense of the impossibility of any man's sustaining the righteous judgment of God. (2) "There is forgiveness with Thee," etc. No man ever comes to that confidence that has not sprung to it, as it were, by a rebound from the other thought. He must first have felt the shudder of the thought, "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities," in order to come to the gladness of the thought, "But there is forgiveness with Thee."

III. "My soul waiteth for the Lord," etc. There is the permanent, peaceful attitude of the spirit that has tasted the consciousness of forgiving love—a continual dependence upon God. The consciousness of sin was the dark night. The coming of God's forgiving love flushed all the eastern heaven with diffused brightness that grew into perfect day. And so the man waits quietly for the dawn, and his whole soul is one absorbing desire that God may dwell with him and brighten and gladden him.

IV. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." There is nothing which isolates a man so awfully as a consciousness of sin and of his relation to God; but there is nothing that so knits him to all his fellows, and brings him into such wide-reaching bonds of amity and benevolence, as the sense of God's forgiving mercy for his own soul. So the call bursts from the lips of the pardoned man, inviting all to taste the experience and exercise the trust which have made him glad.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 31 (see also *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 25, and *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 122).

REFERENCES: cxxx.—S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 217; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 83; H. C. G. Moule, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 87; C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 262. cxxxi. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 100.

Psalm cxxxi., ver. 2.—"My soul is even as a weaned child."

I. THE inward obedience of the heart, the obedience of receiving, the passive, which lies rather in how we take than in what we do, is higher than the active. It is higher because: (1) it is more difficult; (2) it lasts always; (3) it is more like Christ.

II. Consider some of the forms of passive obedience. (1) The

acceptance of our salvation. If ever you are to be saved, you must begin by an act of perfectly passive obedience. There will be abundance of the active presently; but that which saves you is faith—a simple acceptance of your pardon, through what Christ has done according to the will and commandment of God. (2) The great sin and loss of most of us is that we do not give a sufficient portion every day to the receptive influences of the Holy Spirit. (3) How much of life is waiting, only waiting, an entirely passive thing; and God generally exercises the passive before He blesses the active. (4) God has His law of disappointment, and many a one who has been an excellent servant in duty has been sadly wanting when he comes to the obedience of failure.

III. To attain to the blessed state of passive obedience, which asks no questions, which serves without the consciousness of its servitude, two things are necessary. (1) The one is to take grand, honouring views of God. Fill yourself with His majesty and His goodness. (2) Do not measure things. See only His will in sovereignty, His mind in its prescience, His hand in His providence, His tenderness in all His works, His purposes in mercy, for the end is not yet.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 234.

Psalm cxxxi., ver. 2.—"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

SELF-DENIAL of some kind or other is involved, as is evident, in the very notion of renewal and holy obedience. To change our hearts is to learn to love things which we do not naturally love, to unlearn the love of the world; but this involves, of course, a thwarting of our natural wishes and tastes. To be righteous and obedient implies self-command; but to possess power we must have gained it: nor can we gain it without a vigorous struggle, a persevering warfare against ourselves. The very notion of being religious implies self-denial, because by nature we do not love religion.

I. Fasting is clearly a Christian duty, as our Saviour implies in His sermon on the mount. Christian self-denial is not merely a mortification of what is sinful, but an abstinence even from God's blessings.

II. Christ says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Here

He shows us from His own example what Christian self-denial is. It is a taking on us a cross after His pattern, not a mere refraining from sin—for He had no sin—but a giving up what we might lawfully use. This was the peculiar character in which Christ came on earth. It was this spontaneous and exuberant self-denial which brought Him down. The Son of God so loved us, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. Here is our Saviour's self-denial. He "pleased not Himself."

III. Self-denial is incumbent upon us for many reasons. The Christian denies himself in things lawful because he is aware of his own weakness and liability to sin; he dares not walk on the edge of a precipice; instead of going to the extreme of what is allowable, he keeps at a distance from evil, that he may be safe. Christ bids those who would be highest live as the lowest; therefore turn from ambitious thoughts, and, as far as you religiously may, make resolves against taking on you authority and rule. Avoid the dangerous air which relaxes you, and brace yourself upon the heights. So shall self-denial become natural to you, and a change come over you gently and imperceptibly; and, like Jacob, you will lie down in the waste and will soon see angels and a way opened for you into heaven.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 57.

REFERENCES: cxxxi. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1210; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. viii., p. 200; J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 86; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 163.

Psalm cxxxi., vers. 2, 3 (Prayer-book version).—**"I do not exercise myself in great matters: which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low."**

I. THE text carries us into the region of thought. It recognises the responsibility of thinking. It presupposes the possibility of choosing and refusing in the entertainment of subjects. Most men know perfectly well that they can control thought; that they can "make the porter watch" the comings in as well as the goings out, the entrances of thought as well as the exits of action. But the remarkable thing in the text is the enlargement of the responsibility of the self-control from the nature and quality to what we may call the scale and size of the thoughts. He speaks not of low, but of high, thoughts, not of

God;" "Truly my soul waiteth upon God." (2) It is a diffusive hope. The hope of the old Psalmist was strong enough to quicken the hope of all around him; he sang, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." A true hope has the power of infusing itself into the heart of others. (3) It is a practical hope. This characteristic is to be gathered out of the words "from henceforth." It is a hope that should take its start from the actual circumstances in which we are placed. (4) It is an eternal hope. "From henceforth, even for ever," is the watchword of our Psalm. Our hope should and must take the long "for ever" in. It has to do with unchanging realities, with an everlasting salvation; it looks forward to unseen things; it anticipates the ultimate fulfilment and accomplishment of all things that have been spoken by holy prophets since the world began.

H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 87.

References: cxxxi.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 135; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, p. 274; S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 241. cxxxii. 8.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. i., p. 310.

Psalm cxxxii., vers. 8, 9.—"Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest; Thou, and the ark of Thy strength. Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Thy saints shout for joy."

In the Psalm before us this prayer stands in a kind of central position: central to the need which prompted it on the one hand, and on the other hand to the bountiful answer which it received.

I. The Temple is here spoken of as the "rest" or abiding-place of God. The original allusion is doubtless to the long wanderings of the symbol of His presence; and it marks a transition from the nomadic condition of the tribes to the compacted life of the nation, and a transfer of obligation suited to the change.

II. The Temple, gorgeous as it was, was incomplete and valueless without the ark. Unless the Lord took possession, the house was left unto the builders desolate, alienated from the purposes of its construction, a lonely and decorated folly.

III. Notice the other blessings which are directly or by obvious implication asked for in the prayer. (1) The presence of God is the chief, the all-absorbing, object of desire; but that presence implies its own d ffusion in blessing. The ark of His strength in the Temple implies that those who are in communion

with Him may draw upon the resources of His power. (2) The prayer then asks that the "priests may be clothed with righteousness," which is, in fact, a petition for personal purity. (3) The third blessing asked for is a holy joy in God—joy which has its foundation in the sense of oneness with God both in favour and feeling, and which has its outlet in the appropriate expressions of praise.

IV. Notice the bountiful answer to the prayer, so prompt, so generous, so full. The first ten verses of the Psalm are the prayer. In the eleventh the answer begins. The petition is, "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest;" the answer, "This is My rest *for ever:*" the prayer, "Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness;" the answer, "I will also clothe her priests with *salvation*," which is of righteousness the flower, and crown, and perfecting: the prayer, "Let Thy saints shout for joy;" the response, "And her saints shall shout *aloud* for joy." And then, as if were thrown in the largess of the King, there are abundance and bounty, the blessings of the camp and of the "horn;" that is, the gifts of wisdom and power, the discomfiture of his enemies and on his head an ever-prosperous crown.

W. MORLEY PUNSHON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 385.

Psalm cxxxii., ver. 9.—"Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Thy saints shout for joy."

WHAT did these words "priests" and "saints" mean to a Jew? Why does the Psalmist perceive such a close connection between the righteousness of the one and the joy of the other?

I. A whole book of the Pentateuch is written to tell us what the Jewish priest was and what work he did. He could appoint nothing, devise nothing. He was told what he had to do. He was called out, as every other officer of the commonwealth was called out, to be a witness of the Lord God of Israel, of Him who was revealing Himself to the nation, delivering them, governing them, feeding them, judging them. The atonement day testified that the priest was holy, just as every man in the nation was holy, because God had chosen him to be His servant, to do His work; and that he was bound to consider himself holy upon that ground, and upon no other.

II. We have learnt, in speaking of the Jewish priests, what the Jewish saints were. Were they the good men, the choice men of the land, those who stand out in such broad and startling contrast to the stiff-necked race about them? Surely they were these, but then only because they were Israelites, and

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II. We have learnt, in speaking of the Jewish priests, what the Jewish saints were. Were they the good men, the choice men of the land, those who stand out in such broad and startling contrast to the stiff-necked race about them? Surely they were these, but then only because they were Israelites, and

believed themselves to be Israelites, and claimed the rights of Israelites.

III. The prophets trace many of the nation's worst corruptions to the priests. They represented the holiness of the nation; if they ever began to fancy that the holiness was their own, that it belonged to them as members of a caste by hereditary right, one can fancy how soon security would take the place of vigilance, how easily they would learn to look in other men for the evils that were getting full possession of their own hearts, how gladly they would escape from the dreary routine of duties that had no meaning for them to coarse animal indulgence. The effect of such spectacles in lowering the tone of the people at large would be gradual and certain. A joyless, thankless spirit would be diffused through all hearts, visible on all countenances. Everywhere there would be a sense of death and dread of it, a glow of life scarcely anywhere. That such a state of things might not overtake his land, the Psalmist prayed, "Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; let Thy saints shout for joy."

IV. There is the same connection as in former days between the unrighteousness of the priests and the joylessness of the saints or the Church. The prayer of the Psalmist is still the one which we have most need to offer. Throughout the history of modern Europe this truth, I think, is written in sunbeams: that the degeneracy of the priesthood is the main cause of the degeneracy of the nations; and this other: that the degeneracy of the priesthood is always connected with unbelief in the righteousness of God.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 237.

REFERENCES: cxxxii. 13, 16.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 248. cxxxii. 15.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 57.

Psalm cxxxii.

THIS Psalm is plainly a hymn for the consecration of the Temple. We may call it the song of the builders. In its first portion, extending to the close of the seventh verse, the Church pleads with God the many thoughts and long toils that had laid the foundation for His house.

I. Let us gather from this portion some lessons touching preparatory work. (1) Look at the picture which is given us here of the aged king setting himself to his task. He has a sense almost of shame in thinking of his own ease and comfort while so much remains to be done. The repose which he has

earned and reached at last he will not take. He will put his own comfort second, God's service—which is but the noblest name for duty—first. The picture of the text may be a rebuke to the slothfulness of us all. (2) Notice, too, that David's devotedness does make a plea with God. The prayer goes upon the supposition that his toil and self-sacrifice will not, cannot, be all in vain. And the prayer built upon that supposition is answered. (3) Consider how God's remembrance of such preparatory work is shown. David saw no result from all his toils to build the Temple. He got together the great store, but it was reserved for another to mould it into completeness and to see the cloud of glory fill the house. But none the less was it true that God remembered David and all his afflictions, and accepted and crowned his work. So it is with much of every man's doings. We all receive unfinished tasks from those who go before; we all transmit unfinished tasks to them that come after. Our vocation is to advance a little the dominion of God's truth, and to be one of the long line who pass on the torch from hand to hand.

II. Vers. 8—10: The prayer for God's blessing on the builders' work. (1) Notice the one great blessing which all builders for God should desire: "Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest," for the Temple of our rearing is not completed till the ark is in its sanctuary and the cloud fills its courts. (2) From this fundamental petition all the other clauses of the prayer flow: (*a*) power; (*b*) righteousness; (*c*) gladness. Such are the Psalmist's desires for his nation.

III. The final section of the Psalm contains the Divine answer, which more than fulfils the Psalmist's desires. Each single petition is enlarged in the answer to something much greater than itself.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 259.

REFERENCE: cxxxii.—S. COX, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 261.

Psalm cxxxiii., ver. 1 (Prayer-book version).—"Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is: brethren, to dwell together in unity!"

THIS is one of those bursts of feeling the truth and beauty of which every human heart at once acknowledges. Separation, isolation, discord, are unnatural and inhuman.

I. If we wish to appreciate as it deserves this rich gift of God, it is clear that we must look at it in family life. Indeed, the words of the text, however applicable they may be to

national and social concord, suggest to us at once the picture not of a nation or of a numerous society, but of a family. We seem to hear the voice of an elder brother, whose heart cannot contain itself for thankfulness at the sight of peaceful family union. Something has stirred his spirit to detect the greatness of that blessing which has perhaps been interrupted or too long unconsciously enjoyed. At any rate, the beauty of the spectacle must be universally acknowledged. "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is: brethren, to dwell together in unity!"

II. All unity is a delusion unless it is in some sense a representation, however feeble, of the unity which binds Christ to His Father, and Christ's followers to Himself, that blessed unity for which He prayed on the eve of His agony. When we dwell together in true Christian unity, we are witnesses to the truth of Christ's mission. We have a cause of joy which even the Psalmist could not anticipate We prove the truth of Christianity. We prove that our beloved Lord and Master is still conquering the world.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 288.

REFERENCES: cxxxiii. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 218; R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 281. cxxxiii. 3.—J. Pulsford, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 273, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 151.

Psalm cxxxiii.

I. CONSIDER what we may not expect even for the sake of attaining so good a thing as Christian unity. (1) It is absurd and even wrong to suppose that each particular denomination should surrender its prominent witness to the specific truth for the sake of which we may almost say it exists, or in any way diminish the strength and emphasis of its testimony. (2) We cannot expect each other to think lightly of our differences. But the strength of our convictions need not make us unbrotherly towards each other, nor shut us off from those sympathies which should bind together the whole family of God.

II. Consider the unity that is within our reach without any compromise of principle. (1) Might we not promote unity by an occasional interchange of friendly services? (2) We may do much towards the furtherance of Christian unity by endeavouring to educate ourselves to a dispassionate estimate of the points in which we differ, and by assigning their proportionate value to those points in which we agree. (3) Above everything else, we should contribute towards Christian unity by recognising and keeping ever in view the true basis of unity,

Unity, to be real, must begin within. The unity of the Gospel is primarily a unity of the Spirit, and it is to such unity as this that the text calls our attention. It is the unction of the Holy Spirit, which, resting first upon the great Head of the Church, descends even to the very skirts of His garments, makes all one by sanctifying all. The more we know in our own personal experience of that Divine unction, the more shall we be united to each other; and the higher we rise in fellowship with our Head, the more close and real will be the bond of brotherhood. These two things are always necessarily connected: *the higher, the nearer;* the more fellowship with God, the more communion with the children of God.

W. HAY AITKEN, *Newness of Life*, p. 238.

REFERENCES: CXXXIII.—S. COX, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 286. CXXXIV. 1.—J. B. HEARD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. XXII., p. 268. CXXXIV. 2.—H. WHITE, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. IV., p. 247.

PSALM CXXXIV., VER. 3.—"The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion."

WE see here:—

I. Jehovah, the fountain of blessing. The love or goodness of God renders Him the source of blessing. There is in God: (1) an infinite capacity to bless; (2) actual blessing according to that capacity.

II. The heavens and the earth are here brought forward as evidence of Divine capacity to bless.

III. The Church is the channel of blessing.

IV. The saints are the means of spreading this blessing, and that, too, by the spirit of blessing.

V. What is involved in the words "The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion"? It means, The Lord speak comfortably to thee. It means, as expanded in the form given to Aaron, The Lord keep thee; the Lord be thy Shepherd; the Lord restore thy soul when thy spirit wanders; the Lord keep thee in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 1st series, No. 17.

REFERENCE: CXXXIV.—S. COX, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, p. 307.

PSALM CXXXV., VER. 3 (Prayer-book version).—"O praise the Lord, for the Lord is gracious: O sing praises unto His Name, for it is lovely."

I. WE can only understand praise when we see in it the fulfilment of at least two great lines of human emotion; the mistakes

about it are, perhaps, all traceable to an attempt to explain in terms of one or the other what is really blent of both. (1) The first of those instincts is admiration. (2) The other has no such definite single name; but assuredly this is not because it plays a small part in our nature and our life, but rather because its forms and objects are so many. I suppose that there is only one word which we can take as its generic name: the word "love;" but, however we name it, what is meant is that attraction of spirit to spirit which is tinctured, in the different forms in which we know it, with varying amounts of instinct, and conscious of choice, of passion and emotion, of duty and even of interest. It is the mightiest thing in human life.

II. Praise is a constant corrective of the earthliness which hangs about the words and even the thoughts whereby it is contained. And the praise of God is for us the expression of a perfect admiration blended with a perfect love. It is the admiration of a Being who claims all our hearts in personal devotion, while containing or being Himself all that we speak of in abstract categories as the ideals of goodness and beauty. It is the most ennobling exercise of the human spirit.

III. But questions of difficulty spring up around us. (1) Is not such an account of praise purely ideal? Is not the praise of religious people a very different thing, and one very far less noble and disinterested? (2) And, after all, is not such praise as has been described impossible for the best of reasons; viz., that there is no such object as I have described? Is the God of whose dealings we have experience in nature and in life One to evoke unmixed love and admiration? Has not our praise got to submit itself to the fatal necessity of idealising its object in order to praise Him? Does it not, therefore, conceal within itself a canker of insincerity, if not of abjectness and servility? (1) The first of these questions is the easiest to answer, because it merely touches our human infirmity. Unquestionably praise may easily be adulterated with some amount of human selfishness. But this is not the question; the question is, What is the ideal exhibited and striven for? what is the form towards which Christian praise tends in proportion as it realises itself more adequately? And about this there can be no mistake. Christian instinct and teaching has always placed praise as the highest part of worship, precisely because it has most of God and least of man, most of what is abiding and eternal and least of what is associated with the things of time, most of love and adoration and least of self. (2) Notice, next, the objection that

the God of such a world as this is no fit object for our praise. Watch the history of praise. Nature carries us some way in praise, but does so only by help of some instinct which refuses to let what seem the evil, and the confusion, and the injustice in her destroy the witness borne to a good God by her beauty, and her order, and her kindly provisions, and the good that comes even of what we call her evil. Such an instinctive praise, natural in its origin and persistent against difficulties, yields one element of the praises of the Old Testament; but for its crown and justification it had to wait for a manifestation which shows God's sympathy with the dark things of life and nature, which enables us to trust God for the solution or conquest of those dark and oppressive things of which in the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ He took upon Himself the burden and the weight.

E. S. Talbot, *Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduates' Journal*, Nov. 6th, 1884.

Psalm cxxxv., vers. 4-6 (Prayer-book version).—"The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself: and Israel for His own possession," etc.

I. In the covenant which God made with the Jews, and in the strange events, good and bad, which He caused to happen to their nation, not only the great saints among them were taken care of; but all classes and all characters, good and bad, even those who had not wisdom or spiritual life enough to seek God for themselves, still had their share in the good laws, in the teaching and guiding, and in the national blessings which He sent on the whole nation. They had a chance given them of rising, improving, and prospering as the rest of their countrymen rose, and improved, and prospered. And when our Lord came to visit Judæa in flesh and blood, we find that He went on the same method. He did not merely go to such men as Philip and Nathanael, to the holy and elect ones among the Jews, but to the whole people, to the lost sheep as well as to those who were not lost.

II. Now surely the Lord cannot be less merciful now than He was then. He cannot care less for poor orphans and paupers and wild, untaught creatures in England now than He cared for them in Judæa of old. He orders all that happens to us; whether it be war or peace, prosperity or dearth, He orders it all; and He orders things so that they shall work for the good not merely of a few, but of as many as possible, not merely for His elect, but for those who know Him not. As He has been from the

beginning, when He heaped blessings on the stiff-necked and backsliding Israelites; as He was when He endured the Cross for a world lying not in obedience, but in wickedness, so He is now: the perfect likeness of His Father, who is no respecter of persons, but causes "His sun to shine alike on the evil and on the good, and His rain to fall on the just and on the unjust."

C. KINGSLEY, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 226.

REFERENCES: cxxxv. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 84; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 389. cxxxvi. 17-22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1285. cxxxvi. 25.—R. L. Browne, *Sussex Sermons*, p. 61; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 46. cxxxvi.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 787. cxxxvii. 1.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 2nd series, p. 484. cxxxvii. 1-6.—R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 437; Parker, *Expository Sermons and Outlines*, p. 248. cxxxvii. 3.—E. J. Hardy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 56.

Psalm cxxxvii., ver. 4.—"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

LET us ask this question and ponder the answer to it in reference to our own poor efforts to awaken heart and voice to the utterance of the Lord's song, whether of sadness or joy, in the services of the Lord's house on the Lord's Day.

I. Consider the difficulty of singing the Lord's song in a strange land. Difficult as I find it to pray, difficult to confess sin, difficult to ask for grace, it is still more difficult, I find, to praise, to perform that highest, that most unselfish, that most self-forgetting, of all offices of devotion which is the telling forth, in the hearing of others, in the presence, we believe, of the communion of saints, dead as well as living, what God is, in act and in counsel, in power, wisdom, and love. (1) The very life which we live here in the body is a life of sight and sense. The world of our common life is a strange land as regards the realisation of God, and consequently the work of praise. Naturally we walk by sight, and to sing the Lord's song is possible only to faith. (2) Again, the feelings of the present life are often adverse to praise. The exiles in Babylon could not sing because they were in heaviness. In the common meaning of the words, the distressed and sorrowful cannot sing the Lord's song. A body of flesh, a sense of unhappiness, a burden of sin, would stop the voice of praise anywhere in any one. The land itself, so to say, is strange to it.

II. But there is a land, could we but reach it, where praise is,

as it were, indigenous. In heaven praise is the universal tongue. It takes a lifetime to make heaven our own land. How many things go to this, what a multitude of tears and sorrows, of falls and risings again, of resolutions and repentances, of prayers and watchings, of communions and communings with the Unseen! If heaven is to be our land, it must be by our knowing God—God in Christ. We can never sing the Lord's song even here below intelligently or spiritually until we know the Lord. Life itself is only just long enough to educate us for God's eternal praise.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Last Words at Doncaster.*

REFERENCES: cxxxvii. 4.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 221; F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 193; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 129. cxxxvii. 5.—J. Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 254; T. W. Gittens, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 197. cxxxvii. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 345. cxxxvii.—J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 232. cxxxviii. 1.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 72. cxxxviii. 1-3.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 166. cxxxviii. 5.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 32. cxxxviii. 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 82. cxxxviii. 7.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 147.

Psalm cxxxviii., ver. 8 (with Psalm lvi., ver. 4, and Psalm lxi., ver. 2).—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

I. THE hand of God is in everything. No point is more distinct to a trustful, relying spirit, no truth is more settled, than this. There are no fortuities in this world; there is not an event which has not its meaning, its connections, and its end. The confidence which gives peace, and fixedness, and strength to the mind fastens upon the views which the Bible gives of God, His agency and His purposes, as a God who is concerned with everything, and who acts in everything in reference to an end worthy of Himself.

II. The word of God, in which faith rests, contemplates man in all the various circumstances of his being, in every possible or supposable condition in which he may be placed. The promise of a Saviour, and of all good in Him, covers all our interests; hence the word which is given to us is full of promises, and they are "exceeding great and precious"—great in their range, because there is no circumstance which they do not reach; precious in their character, because there is no exigency in our affairs to which they are not adapted.

III. All these promises are promises in Christ Jesus; and herein we have the evidence of their certainty, the assurance of their fulfilment.

IV. The Christian's confidence has been actually tested by experiment, and has never yet failed. Confidence in God always ministers peace and joy to the human spirit.

E. MASON, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 124.

REFERENCES: cxxxviii. 8.—J. J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1441; A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 152; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 144; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 231, and vol. xxv., No. 1506; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 145; A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 158. cxxxviii.—Bishop Thorold, *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 23.

Psalm cxxxix., vers. 1, 2.—"O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising."

I. DEEP indeed and mysterious, far beyond what we can understand, are our own ordinary sleeping and waking; we know not how it is that the soothing quietness which we call sleep steals over the soul and body, nor how the two wake together and begin to act as before. Our sleeping and our waking are beyond our own knowledge and our own power; God keeps both in His own hand. And if our ordinary taking of rest in sleep and rousing up to our work again—if these are so strange and mysterious, how much more the death and resurrection of our Lord, His slumber on the Cross and His wakening out of the grave.

II. We know not concerning other men's death and resurrection; and what is still more awful to each one of us, and comes nearer home to our hearts, we know not, every one for himself, what manner of death and resurrection our own will be. We know not, but God knoweth all. Let us trust Him without asking questions, as little children trust their parents. Surely He has power to order all for our good; else how could He raise Himself again, and in His human soul and body ascend into heaven, and there sit down at the right hand of the Father, all power being given unto Him in heaven and in earth?

J. KEBLE, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 97.

REFERENCES: cxxxix. 1, 2.—W. M. Taylor, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 32; J. W. Gleadall, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 27.

Psalm cxxxix., vers. 1-3.—"O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off," etc.

THE fact that God is always present and knows every minute

trifle in our lives, and that His unerring judgment will assuredly take count of every detail of our character and conduct, neither exaggerating nor omitting, but applying absolute justice—this truth is one of those which lose force from their very universality. That we should be so little checked, so little awed, in the course of our daily lives, by this perpetual and awful Presence; that we should know God to be looking at every motion and every impulse, and should be so unmoved; that we should do so many things before God's face which the opening of a door and the entrance of a fellow-creature would instantly stop—this is an instance of that weakness of faith which proves the fall of man.

I. There is no need to exaggerate in this matter. We may recognise to the full that it is a part of God's own ordinance that we should be, as it were, unconscious of His presence during the greater part of every day of our lives. But that which is quite peculiar in this case is the nature of the forgetfulness. In the presence of father or of mother, or of any one else for whom you care, though you forget, yet the slightest real temptation, still more the slightest open sin, is sure to put you instantly in remembrance. Now I fear there is no such perpetual readiness in us to remember the presence of God. We forget His presence in the absorption of our daily employments and amusements; and forgetting it, we approach some sin which we know that He has forbidden. But our approach to the forbidden path rarely puts us in mind of the awful eye that is ever silently marking our steps. This is a veil which the devil puts before our eyes. It is the blindness of our fallen state.

II. The right state of mind plainly is to have the thought of God's presence so perpetually at hand, that it shall always start before us whenever it is wanted. (1) This perpetual, though not always conscious, sense of God's presence would, no doubt, if we would let it have its perfect work, gradually act on our characters just as the presence of our fellow-men does. (2) This habit, beyond all others, strengthens our faith.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 178.

REFERENCES: cxxxix. 1-12.—F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 110; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 83; E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 328. cxxxix. 5.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 70; C. S. Robinson, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 73. cxxxix. 7.—A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 118. cxxxix. 7-10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 10. cxxxix. 9.—A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 257.

Psalm cxxxix., ver. 7.—"Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?"

I. God is in all modes of personal existence. These are all covered by the contrast between heaven and hell, than which no words would suggest a completer contrast to every thoughtful Hebrew.

II. God's presence is in the yet untrodden ways of human history. There came sometimes to the untravelled Israelites a perception that the world was very large. The ninth verse of this Psalm gives us an image of the Psalmist, standing by the sea-shore, watching as the rising sun broadens the horizon, and brings into view an islet here and there, which, by catching the sight, serves but to lengthen still more the indefinite expanse beyond. The fancy is suggested, half of longing, half of dread, What would it be to fly until he reached the point where now the furthest ray is resting, to gaze upon a sea still shoreless or to land in an unknown region and find himself a solitary there? But he is not daunted by the vision; one Presence would still be with him. Vast as the world is, it is contained within the vaster God. In a similar mood of not wholly barren dreaming we sometimes look out over the boundless possibilities of human life. Amid all possibilities one thing is sure: go where we may, go the world how it may, we shall find the ever-present God.

III. God's presence is in the perplexities of our experience. The untrodden ways of life are not the only, nor even the principal, obscurities in life; there are incidents in man's experience which seem only the more perplexing the more we know of them. There is the mystery of pain, and that strange fluctuation of spiritual emotion which pain often brings; there are the complications of human relations, in which the saintliest seem often the victims of the basest or the sacrifices for the sins of others; there are the conflicts of noble affections, of the purpose of patience with the impulse of indignation, of our love of men in its pleadings against the fear of God. It is by perceiving the fruitful issues of perplexity in our experience that we gain the confidence that God is in the discipline, its Author and Controller. He who believes in God enters into rest; a large faith means a repose which cannot be shaken. A. Mackennal, *Sermons from a Sick-room*. p. 85.

Psalm cxxxix., ver. 11 (Prayer-book version).—"The darkness and light to Thee are both alike."

I. There is the darkness of perplexity. If ever it be worth

while to think over what have been our most unhappy moments, we shall find that they have been those when our mind was divided. The language of our hearts at such a time would be, "Lord, give me light; make Thy way plain before my face." But then another Scripture saith—and brings surely the same answer of peace—"The darkness is no darkness to Thee. The darkness and light to Thee are both alike."

II. There is the darkness of shame after relapse into sin. There is scarcely anything so paralysing to the energies of a young soul seeking after God as the sense of shame for sins renewed. But if we could believe the words in their spiritual meaning, "The darkness and light to Thee are both alike," surely we should gather fresh might from our defeat, and learn in the darkness of self-distrust the secret of final victory.

III. The darkness of gloomy, distressing thoughts. Across all the varied phrases which describe the different interpretations that men have put upon their own unrest lies the deep, abiding fact that the heart *will* have its hours of darkness. In the midst of joy we are in gloom. These are the hours or moments when we are tempted to be unbelievers. The "still, small voice" of conscience is inaudible; and the Lord is not in the gloom. Here again let us listen to the voice of the Psalmist, "The darkness is no darkness with Thee. The darkness and light to Thee are both alike." Once let us grasp the truth that God, who made the light, made the darkness also, and that He wishes us to feel alone that we may at last be alone with Him, from that moment the darkness lifts.

IV. The darkness of sorrow. The darkness and the light are both alike to God. Those dear friends who have gone down into darkness and silence are in light with God. Our darkness is no darkness to Him. Our night is His and their eternal day.

V. The darkness of religious doubt. Those who are tried by even the extreme shadow of this darkness, and groan under its chilly touch, need most of all cling to the central conviction that here too, where full faith is not, God *is*. "Even here shall His hand lead them, and His right hand shall hold them," if only they will not "cast away their confidence," nor place it anywhere but in Him.

H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 245.

References: cxxxix. 13-24.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 360.

Psalm cxxxix., ver. 14.—"I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

CONSIDER some of the thoughts which press upon a mind conscious of its own wonderful nature. It perceives in part an evident likeness, and in part an equally marked unlikeness, to its Maker. (1) We know by instinct and by revelation that God has made us in part like to Himself; that is, immortal. (2) We learn that our nature stands in a marked contrast to the Divine; that the immortal nature which is within us is of a mutable kind, susceptible of the most searching changes.

I. Our immortal being is always changing, for good or evil, always becoming better or worse. All our life long, and in every stage of it, this process, which we vaguely call the formation of character, is going on. Our immortal nature is taking its stamp and colour; we are receiving and imprinting ineffaceable lines and features. As the will chooses, so the man is.

II. This continual change is also a continual approach to, or departure from, God. Heaven and hell are but the ultimate points of the diverging lines on which all are ever moving. The steady and changeless rise and fall of the everlasting lights is not more unerring. It is a moral movement, measured upon the boundaries of life and death.

III. Such as we become in this life by the moral change wrought in our immortal nature, such we shall be for ever. Our eternal state will be no more than the carrying out of what we are now. And if these things be so, with how much awe and fear have we need to deal with ourselves. (1) We must needs learn to keep a keen watch over our hearts. Every change that passes upon us has an eternal consequence; there is something ever flowing from it into eternity. (2) We have need not only to watch, but to keep up a strong habit of self-control. By its own continual acting, our fearful and wonderful inward nature is perpetually determining its own character. It has a power of self-determination, which to those who give over watching and self-control becomes soon unconscious, and at last involuntary.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 47.

Psalm cxxxix., ver. 14.—"I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

LET us observe some of the mysteries which are involved in our own nature,

I. We are made up of soul and body. Now if we did not know this so that we cannot deny it, what notion could our minds ever form of such a mixture of natures; and how should we ever succeed in making those who go only by abstract reason take in what we meant?

II. The soul is not only one, and without parts, but moreover, as if by a great contradiction even in terms, it is in every part of the body. It is nowhere, yet everywhere.

III. Consider what a strange state we are in when we dream, and how difficult it would be to convey to a person who had never dreamed what was meant by dreaming. These are a few out of the many remarks which might be made concerning our own mysterious state, but this is a very large subject. Let a man consider how hardly he is able and how circuitously he is forced to describe the commonest objects of nature, when he attempts to substitute reason for sight how difficult it is to define things, and he will not wonder at the impossibility of duly delineating in earthly words the First Cause of all thought, the Father of spirits, the one eternal Mind, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen or can see, the incomprehensible, infinite God.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 282.

REFERENCES: cxxxix. 14.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 321; E. A. Abbott, *Sermons in Cambridge*, pp. 1, 23, 49. cxxxix. 17.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 121. cxxxix. 17, 18.—A. C. Price, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 171.

Psalm cxxxix., vers. 19-24.—"Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men," etc.

I. THERE is a peculiarity of expression in this Psalm which we certainly should not find in any Christian hymn, and one which cannot fail to strike us. What can be more remarkable than the contrast between the former part of the text and the sublime meditation which precedes? It startles us thus to be carried from thoughts of God's omniscience and omnipresence and His superintending providence and watchful love into the midst of a conflict in which human passions are roused, to find their vent in strong invective. It is impossible to disguise the fact that there does run through the Psalter this spirit of intense hatred of wickedness and wicked men. In many instances, no doubt, the sense of wrong, and violence, and persecution stirs it into keener life. The psalmists are always in the minority, always on the weak side, humanly speaking. But they are

profoundly convinced that their cause is right. They are sure that God is on their side. They hate evil with all their hearts, because they love God with all their hearts.

II. But now the question forces itself upon us, Are we justified ourselves in using these bitter and burning words? Is it right to pray, "Oh that Thou wouldest slay the wicked, O God"? Are these words in harmony with the Christian conscience? (1) It is quite plain that the general current of the Psalter, the strain and tone of feeling running through it, cannot be antagonistic to our Christian conscience, or the Christian Church throughout the world would not have adopted the Psalter as its perpetual book of devotion. Therefore, though there may be single expressions in the Psalter, imprecations and burning words, which are not suitable in Christian mouths, depend upon it that the whole strain of the Psalter, as sternly set against evil, is not opposed to the Christian conscience. (2) The New Testament is not so entirely opposed to the spirit and teaching of the Old on this point as is sometimes asserted. The chief difference lies here: (*a*) that in the New Testament we are taught to carry the endurance of wrong much further than was possible or conceivable before Jesus our Master set us an example that we should follow in His steps, and (*b*) that we are taught by Him and His Apostles what we are not taught distinctly by psalmists and prophets: to distinguish between the sinner and the sin, between the wickedness which a man does and the man himself; that we are to try and root out wickedness without rooting out the wicked from the earth; that, with the patience of God, we are to bear with the evil and seek to reform the evil, even whilst we long to see it come to an end. (3) We may not cherish a personal hatred; we may not seek for a personal vengeance. But it is our bounden duty to hate wickedness and wicked characters with all our hearts.

J. J. S. PEROWNE, *Sermons*, p. 68.

Psalm cxxxix., ver. 21.—"Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee?"

THE Psalmist answers his own question: "Yea, I hate them right sore, even as though they were mine enemies." We should most of us reply quite differently. We should say, Hate them! We hate nothing. We try to obey Christ's command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." "There is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the end of it is the way of death." I believe that this plausible, self-complacent

language of ours indicates that we are in exceeding danger of wandering into that dark road, if we are not walking in it already.

I. The force of the sentence evidently turns upon the word "Thee." David knew that there was a Divine Presence with him. When he clave to this righteous Judge and Lawgiver, when he acknowledged His guidance and desired that all the movements of his life should be ruled by Him, then did he himself, and his fellow-men, and the world around, come forth out of mist and shadow into the sunlight. Everything was seen in its true proportions.

II. David hated whatever rose up against righteousness and truth in the earth, whatever sought to set up a lie. He felt that there were deadly powers which were working deadly mischief in God's world. In the inmost region of his being he had to encounter these principalities of spiritual wickedness. His hatred grew just in proportion to the degree in which he believed, trusted, delighted in, a Being of absolute purity and perfection.

III. Can it be that the blessing of our Christian profession consists in this, that we have acquired a patience of whatever hates God and rises up against Him, which David had not? Assuredly our Christian profession then does not mean the following the example of our Saviour Christ and being like Him. He was engaged in a conflict to blood against evil, in a death-struggle whether it should put out the light of the world or whether that light should prevail against it.

IV. Determine to hate that which rises up in you against God—that first, that chiefly—and you will hate, along with your indifference, cowardice, meanness, all your conceit of your own poor judgment, your dislike of opposition to it, your unwillingness to have your thoughts probed to the quick. And so with this hatred, deeply and inwardly cherished, will come the true, and not the imaginary, charity, the genuine, not the bastard, toleration.

F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 309.

Psalm cxxxix., vers. 23, 24.—"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I. These words express an appeal to the omniscience of God in proof of the sincerity of the Psalmist's love to Him. There is a frank affection and candour about the words to which the

heart of our own personal experience readily corresponds. They breathe the quiet repose of one speaking in confidence to another whom he trusts, and whom he is authorised to trust.

II. The words express a single-hearted and undivided desire that nothing whatever may interpose between the soul and God, or interrupt the enjoyment of His presence. This second feeling is a necessary part of the first. Whatever there was in his heart, or in his thoughts, or in his manner and his conduct, displeasing to God, and which prevented his walking in the way of everlasting life—that the Psalmist was prepared to give up, holding nothing back. His prayer implies a desire for holiness at any cost of discipline and chastisement, a wish to learn the lesson even though it should be beneath the rod, to get nearer to God even though the path should tear him away from all he loved below.

E. GARBETT, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 106.

THE blessedness of God's thorough knowledge of us—this is the subject of our meditation.

I. Think, first, of the blessedness of God's knowledge of our loyalty.

II. Think of the blessedness of God's knowledge of our struggles.

III. Think of the blessedness of God's thorough knowledge of our sins.

IV. Consider the power which every good resolve derives from the fact that we can make it known to God.

V. Notice the blessedness of the fact that He who knows us thoroughly is our Helper and Leader.

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 45.

REFERENCES: cxxxix. 23, 24.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 253; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 222; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 205. cxxxix. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 903; T. Wallace, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 260. cxxxix.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 177; G. Matheson, *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 356. cxl. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 310. cxli. 2.—E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 50. cxli. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1049.

Psalm cxli., vers. 7, 8.—"Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord: in Thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute."

THE text presents three contrasts, which we shall do well to consider.

I. Our union with past generations and the intense reality of our present life. Observe the use of the word "our:" "*Our* bones are scattered at the grave's mouth." He looks at the bones, and speaks as if they were partly his own, as if they belonged partly to living men. He identifies himself with past generations. This human life that we are living now is not a new thing. It is old, very old. From the scattered bones the Psalmist learnt intensity. "Mine eyes are toward Thee, O God the Lord." The man who keeps his eyes directed towards God feels life new and fresh, although the bones of many generations are scattered around him.

II. In the text we see the littleness and the greatness of man. The scattered bones proclaim the littleness of man. Look back on the ages; men rise and fade like bubbles on a stream. Man is weak, very feeble, and mean. Yet when I think of man in his weakness turning his eyes to the infinite God, when I reflect that man can think of a boundless and perfect One, that man looks to Him, that he has an eye that sees the invisible God, that he claims the society of the Maker of all worlds and is restless till he finds it, then I see the greatness of man. There is nothing wider or higher than looking to God and eternity. The grave is the proof of the weakness of man; but a being that can write over the grave, "He is not dead, but sleepeth," is not mean.

III. The text presents a melancholy prospect and a rising above it. The prospect before us all is this: by-and-bye our bones will be scattered about the grave's mouth. We ought to contemplate steadily the fact, for unless this is done, we shall not feel the necessity of rising above the prospect by higher thoughts. There is just one remedy, one antidote, one means of conquering all thoughts of this kind; and the text presents it: "Mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord."

J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 275.

Psalm cxlii., ver. 7.—"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name."

I. Consider what is to be understood by "the soul in prison." The ideas suggested by the word "prison" are such as these: deprivation of liberty, severe and gloomy restraint, and exclusion from all sources of worldly comfort and enjoyment. We may say also that there is usually associated with it the idea of degradation and infamy. We are led by the text to connect

these ideas with certain states of the soul, or certain experiences through which it may sometimes have to pass. (1) This expression holds good of the spiritual condition of those who are yet without Christ, and therefore unrenewed. (2) This expression holds good concerning believers when, selfishness or worldliness having for a season gained the ascendency, they lose that sensible comfort and enjoyment which they once had in religion, and feel as if they were plunged into darkness. (3) This expression holds good especially in the case of those who, through the neglect of watchfulness, are betrayed into the commission of sins which wound the conscience, and thus destroy the soul's peace, and comfort, and freedom. (4) The expression may be applied to the case of those who from their peculiar mental temperament, and perhaps partly from other causes, habitually take a gloomy view of their own spiritual state, and are thus strangers to all peace and joy in believing.

II. Notice some things connected with the deliverance. (1) It is achieved by the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) The deliverance of the unconverted man and of the believer is wrought out in the same way.

III. Notice the effects of the deliverance. "That I may praise Thy name," the praising of God being not only the devout and heartfelt ascription of thanks to Him as the Giver of all good, but the faithful employment of all the blessings He has bestowed, whether temporal or spiritual, for the ends for which He has given them; that is, generally for the advancement of His glory. There is an obvious lesson for those whose soul has been brought out of prison. The Lord, who has visited you graciously, demands of you now the sacrifice of praise. He has a great work to be carried on in this world, and in loosing your bonds He has fitted you for taking part in it.

A. D. DAVIDSON, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 365.

REFERENCE: cxliii. 5.—T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 300.

Psalm cxliii., ver. 8.—"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk."

THE text may be said to comprise every other prayer. If God gives His servant to "know the way wherein he should walk," and strength to walk in it, peace, and order, and liberty, and joy will soon come. Life is a daily difficulty. Think of the number of things that are to be believed, that are to be renounced,

that are to be examined, that are to be distinguished in themselves and from other things, that are to be tentatively dealt with, that are to be done, that are to be left undone, that are to be waited for, that are to be suffered. All these are included in the "way wherein we should walk."

I. Opinions and beliefs. There can be no living way for a man that does not involve these. We are bound to form them, and the point is that there is very great difficulty in forming some of them or in keeping them when we have them. Any one of us, if we will, may be of them that believe to the saving of the soul. How? By bringing the whole case fully and earnestly before God. If we come really to Him, we have solved the difficulty, we have come into the new and living way, and God will make that way more and more plain before our face; whereas if we abide among the exterior things —examining, considering, comparing, putting this opinion against that, and working the whole matter simply as a high intellectual problem, without ever making the last and highest appeal—we have no certainty of a good and true issue.

II. Conduct. In respect of conduct also we find life to be a scene of constant difficulty. Even those who know the way they should go, so far as it consists of beliefs, convictions, principles, find it still in their practice to be a way of continual difficulty. What can we do? We can pray. We can use this text and get the benefits it carries. The solution of all difficulty, be it what it may, is "to lift up the soul to God." God is the God of peace; and to lift up the soul to Him is to rise out of storm into calm, is to leave the self-made troubles of life beneath us while we mount up on eagles' wings into His eternal and illimitable tranquillity.

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 190.

REFERENCES: cxliii. 8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 564. cxliii. 9.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 169.

Psalm cxliii., ver. 10.—**"Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God."**

THERE are two kinds of active obedience: one which is called negative, which consists in refraining from something because God has commanded us to refrain, but which can still be called active, because it ranges from action, and the other because it lies in the direct doing of what we are ordered.

I. All our obedience has to do with the activities of love. (1) Towards God Himself they are either acts of trustful affection, such as the casting of the soul upon God; or acts of worship

and adoration, such as prayer and praise, whether public or private, and the holy sacraments; or work done for the extension of God's kingdom upon the earth; or any action which is performed simply for the glory of God. All those are instances of active obedience done direct to God. (2) Towards man they are acts of forgiveness; acts of sympathy, either in joy or sorrow; acts of kindness or charity; acts of submission to constituted authority.

II. But to make any of these "active obedience" two things are absolutely necessary. (1) They must have a far end in God Himself; (2) they must not be mere feelings.

III. Notice a few rules for active obedience. (1) Clear away the dust which is always gathering round a command to mystify and confound it. (2) Be sure of your motive. (3) Obey trustingly. (4) There must be alacrity; it is no obedience that does not feel, "I will run in the way of Thy commandments." (5) Remember that all obedience to God must be like what the Jews were required to give to God: a whole burnt-offering. (6) Your obedience must be your liberty and your joy.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 240.

Psalm cxliii., ver. 10.—"Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

THREE things David had evidently learned which it would be well for us if we had never forgotten: (1) the kindness of the Spirit; (2) a certain "leading;" (3) that leading into a better, and truer, and more beautiful state of things, which he calls the "land of uprightness." It was a true principle when David laid the base of everything in the kindness of the Spirit. It was as when we say, "God is love," and feel that we have got down to the very rock of the foundation of everything. Just so it stands here in its own grand sufficiency, "Thy Spirit is good." And there was a deep acquaintance with the philosophy of all moral truth when David brought together a Spirit of kindness and a "land of uprightness." For what other than the Spirit of kindness ever does lead any one into those open fields of truth and honesty?

I. Perhaps we have not sufficiently considered the lovingness of the character of the Third Person in the Holy Trinity. To the minds of many, who still recognise His complete personality, He is as One almost passionless. To some He is associated with the thoughts of reproof and sternness. The chief and highest name of the Holy Spirit is "Comforter," and not a comforter,

as though He were one among many, but exclusively so that whatever comfort there is in all the world dates itself in Him: "the Comforter." His very title, twice repeated, is "Spirit of love," and His first-fruit and all His fruits—for each fruit in order is only the expression of the first; it is only the same grace placed in a different combination—"love."

II. The Holy Ghost is a great Leader. He guides into all truth: truth of thought first, truth of feeling next, truth of action afterwards. His leadings tend to the land of uprightness. And where is that? Truth's land must be Christ's land, because Christ is truth; and therefore the Gospel must be "the land of uprightness."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 343.

Psalm cxliii., ver. 10 (Prayer-book version).—"Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God: let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness."

THE foundations of the religious character which was to be perfected in the mind of Christ were laid in faith in God and in the recognition of the supremacy of the moral law. Through ages and generations the Bible sets before us the slow growth, the unfolding and ripening, of this character, till, after long preparation and many steps, and still with many shortcomings, it became such that when Jesus Christ came it was able and qualified to welcome Him; to recognise, however dimly, His Divine glory; to follow Him; and from strength to strength and grace to grace, to rise to something of His likeness. We have the full birth of religious affection in the Psalms and of religious thought and reason in the Prophets.

I. The Psalms bring before us, in all its fulness and richness, the devotional element of the religious character. They are the first great teachers and patterns of prayer. And they show this side of the religious character not, as hitherto, in outline, but in varied and finished detail, in all its compass and living and spontaneous force.

II. This immense variety of mood, and subject, and occasion, with which reverence and hope are always combined, is the further point in the work of the Book of Psalms. It is a vast step in the revealing of man to man. It shows what indeed God is to the soul in all its many moods. The soul cannot be alone without Him; He is the centre of attraction to all His creatures, the fountain and the loadstone of all love, high above the highest, yet humbling Himself "to behold the things that

are in heaven and in the earth." (1) A profound and immovable belief in God's righteousness is the faith which dominates the whole Psalter. (2) With this faith in the soul has come the stirring and enlightening conscience. We see in the Psalms how it has learned to look into itself, how it has learned the need of the inward watch, the inward struggle, the inward self-disclosure. (3) But if the Psalms have taught us the language of penitence, what ever equalled before the Day of Pentecost the freedom, the joy, of their worship? In the Book of Psalms we see the growing up in the religious character of these high gifts of the Spirit of God: devotion, worship, self-knowledge.

III. The great and characteristic ideas of the Psalms reappear in the Prophets, but in the Psalms they come in devotion addressed to God; the Prophets turn them back upon men, and expand and develop them in instruction, and encouragement, and rebuke. (1) Ezekiel is emphatically the prophet of the moral significance of the Law and of personal responsibility. (2) In the awful volume of Isaiah, in which thought and imagination are allowed to master the vision of the world, wherein is embodied all that most concerns man in the present and the future, and in which the tremendous severity of judgment mingles so strangely with a gracious and inexpressible sweetness which even still takes us by surprise—through all these Divinely inspired utterances we may trace, with a fulness, and richness, and depth unequalled in the Old Testament, the personal lineaments of one who not only by faith and self-discipline, but also by thought, and reason, and knowledge, had become fitted to be one of the company of that Redeemer whose person, whose coming, whose life of suffering and glory, he was going to foretell, and in whose perfection man was to be made perfect.

R. W. CHURCH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 129 (see also *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 201).

REFERENCES: cxliii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1519; G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 198; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 163; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 219; *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 504.

Psalm cxliii., ver. 12.—"I am Thy servant."

I. WHAT goes to make that Christlike title a "servant"—a servant of God and a servant of man for His sake? It was promised in your first and great covenant in life that you would be always a servant of God; but before you really take your place in God's household, there must be a special voluntary act

on your part, which is your engagement. The first question then is, Have you, by a definite act of your own will, given yourself to God, to be His servant?

II. This done, the next question is, What marks a servant? The proper word would be "slave." It is the part of a true servant to do anything which his master wishes him to do. He is ready for everything. The reason is that he works from love; and therefore all he does he does with a will, pleasantly, lovingly, faithfully.

III. Does God give His servants wages for what they do? Yes, always. Salvation is not wages; heaven is not wages. Where then are the wages of good works? (1) Very often providences, sometimes happy ones, sometimes bitter ones, but both wages; (2) conscience—a good conscience; (3) growth: more grace, more light, more peace, more faith, and more of the presence of Christ; (4) and in heaven the degrees, higher measures and capacities of glory awarded according to the service done.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 12th series, p. 61.

Psalm cxliii., ver. 12 (Prayer-book version).—"And of Thy goodness slay mine enemies; and destroy all them that vex my soul; for I am Thy servant."

I. WE have nothing to do with the historical sense of these and other like passages; it is not, and cannot be, in their historical and human meaning that the Psalms are the perpetual storehouse of prayer and thanksgiving for the people of God in every age. But the spiritual meaning of these words expresses an eternal truth which we should do ill not to remember. We have enemies; we have those that vex our soul; the Psalmist spoke a language which every one of God's servants may echo; and these enemies are bringing our soul every day nigh unto hell.

II. These words are of importance, because we see that if we are indolent or slumbering, we have an enemy who is wakeful; that as we hope for the help of God's Spirit, so we have against us the power of the spirit of evil; that, with a working mysterious indeed and incomprehensible, as is the working of God's Spirit, no less, yet with a fruit clearly manifest, there is an influence busy in undoing every work of grace in our souls, in driving away every thought of penitence or of love, in instigating every evil desire, in deepening every fit of spiritual slumber. The need which we have of this prayer makes it no less

needful that our labour and our watchfulness should be in proportion to it.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 331.

Psalm **cxliv., ver. 1.**—"Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

I AM far from thinking that this sentence applies exclusively to what we designate spiritual conflicts. I should suppose that David, or whoever the writer of the Psalm was, gave thanks that he had been able to fight with the Philistines and the Ammonites. No one who had learned Jewish history by heart would attempt an artificial division between national wars and spiritual wars. The first supposed the last; the visible enemy was permitted to put forth his strength that the spiritual strength which was dormant might be called forth to withstand him. Man is made for battle. His inclination is to take his ease; it is God who will not let him sink into the slumber which he counts so pleasant, and which is so sure to end in a freezing death.

I. I have spoken of this thanksgiving as of universal application; there are some cases in which we shrink from using it, and yet in which we are taught by experience how much better we should be if we dared to use it in all its force and breadth. There are those who feel much more than others the power of that first enemy of which I have spoken. To withstand the lusts of the flesh, not to be completely overpowered by them, is with them, through constitution, or education, or indulgence, such an effort as their nearest friends may know nothing of. What help then may be drawn from the words, "Blessed be the Lord God, who has taught my hands to war, and my fingers to fight"!

II. Violent desires or passions remind us of their presence The fashion of the world is hemming us in and holding us down without our knowing it. A web composed of invisible threads is enclosing us. It is not by some distinct influence that we are pressed, but by an atmosphere full of influences of the most mixed quality, hard to separate from each other. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who stirs the hands to war, and the fingers to fight," for the Divine order which He has established, and not man. Blessed be that Lord God for not allowing His creature, His child, to lie buried under the weight of opinions, maxims, traditions, which is crushing him; for giving him

visions of a city which has foundations, of which He is the Builder and Maker; for giving him the assurance that he may, and that he must, beat down all obstacles that hinder him from possessing its glorious privileges.

III. Least of all is there any natural energy in us to contend against that enemy who is described in Scripture as going about seeking whom he may devour. Is it not true that the time which boasts to have outlived the evil spirit is the one which is most directly exposed to his assaults? May it not be that our progress has brought us into a closer conflict with the spiritual wickedness in high places than our forefathers were ever engaged in? Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who teacheth our hands to war, and our fingers to fight. Blessed be He for bringing us into immediate encounter with His own immediate enemies, that so we may know more than others did of His own immediate presence.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 317.

REFERENCES: cxliv. 4.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 162, and vol. iii., p. 133. cxliv. 5.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 88.

Psalm cxliv., ver. 12.—"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished" (sculptured) "after the similitude of a palace."

I. THESE two figures express, in different ways, the notions of fixity and substance. Both plant and column are fixed and steady. The plant is fixed by its roots into the earth, the column fixed into the building. Life must be rooted in fixed belief in God and the way of reconciliation and fellowship with Him. This belief alone gives meaning, and purpose, and substance to life. It is great truths believed that nourish the soul.

II. Growth and permanence are both set forth in the text. Growth belongs just as necessarily to the conception of a plant as permanence does to that of a column. Growth of soul and spirit is the result of holding firmly to great central truths and drawing the very pith of them into the being. While man represents progress and woman permanence, the true ideal life includes both equally.

III. In the plant and the column we have represented individualism, separateness, independence, and, on the other hand, combination, unity, and mutual help and support.

IV. The text speaks of two different kinds of beauty: that of

the plant, the beauty of nature; that of the sculptured column, the beauty of culture. We are reminded that all beauty of soul must be the result both of nature and cultivation. (1) That the soul may be beautiful, it must be a living soul, living by contact with the infinite, in fellowship with God. This is truly the beauty of nature, the deepest nature. (2) Think of the sculpturing of that stone. If the substance had had feeling, at what cost that beautiful form would have been obtained! Human souls are shaped into beauty often through great suffering and trial. Let us not forget that. But let us specially consider that we must wield the chisel and mallet on ourselves, strike off the evil, and seek that the ideal of our nature should come out.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 178.

Psalm cxliv., ver. 12.—"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth."

DAVID is not praying that the youth of the land should have any abnormal precociousness, or should be in any way ahead of their years; but the picture before his mind is that of vigorous, healthful, upright, manly, and ingenuous youth: and he feels that this, if realised, would be the highest glory of the land. For the young men of his country he desired:—

I. A healthful frame; a strong, robust, vigorous physique. It has been said that as righteousness is the health of the soul, so health is the righteousness of the body.

II. A solid character. A quaint writer says, "If a man is to grow, he must grow like a tree; there must be nothing between him and heaven." It is an old adage that knowledge is power, but it is still more true to say that character is power.

III. A hidden life. Each of you needs that which no human power can communicate, and without which the fairest religious profession is only a painted corpse. Personal and saving religion is no development from within, no product of moral evolution; it is something whose germ must be imparted to you by the Holy Spirit, and without which germ you are in the sight of God absolutely dead.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 239.

REFERENCES: cxliv. 12.—W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 338. cxliv. 15.—F. W. Farrar, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 33; W. M. Arthur, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 200. cxlv. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 295. cxlv. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1902.

Psalm cxlv., ver. 4.—"One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts."

I. The text places the transmitting generation first, but in our use of it we ought perhaps to invert the order. For the ages can hand down nothing which did not come to them from without; if we mount upward step by step, we find at last that the heritage of truth and grace was a free gift of revelation to mankind: and therefore the earliest was a receiving generation. Men can give nothing that they did not first receive. (1) All the ages of time are in their unceasing flow recipients of parcels and fragments of one great manifestation of God in the glory of His name, His works, and His redeeming grace. (2) This revelation has not flowed on equably from age to age. There have been great critical periods in this general evolution of the majesty of God's revelation accumulating through the centuries, and we in our day inherit the last and best tradition. (3) The past generations have bequeathed to us as a people a special heritage in the general unfolding of the ways and works of God. We have inherited from our fathers the common Christianity in the fulness of time. Our duty is: (*a*) to glorify God for the privileges thus transmitted; (*b*) to use these privileges aright.

II. The receiving generation is the transmitter also. Each is a link in the golden chain that eternity let down into time, and which from time is ascending to eternity again. Each age receives only what it has to pass on to the next. It has pleased God to make every generation a trustee for the generations to come. And all sacred history attests that the gradual unfolding of the name and works of God has been bound up with the fidelity of the successive depositaries of the Divine counsel. There is no law more patent in the administration of the moral government of the world than that each generation receives its portion in due season from its predecessor, and is responsible only for that; secondly, that each generation impresses its own influence for good or evil on what it receives; and, thirdly, that it must needs transmit what is received to the generation following with the impress of its own character.

W. B. Pope, *The Inward Witness*, p. 160.

References: cxlv. 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 562. cxlv. 6, 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1828. cxlv. 7.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxv., No. 1468.

Psalm cxlv., ver. 9.—"The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works."

The fact of creation is a miracle; it is the origination of the

laws of nature, and therefore above and beyond these laws themselves. It is the first link from which all these laws proceed. The two first necessary conditions of our thought and sensation, space and time, are, as regards this material universe, the two first and the two greatest of God's works.

I. All those ranks of vegetable and animal being which we now behold, originated by the Divine will, were by the same Divine will placed under certain definite laws, by which their continuance in being and reproduction were to be regulated, and were endowed with faculties whereby they were able to follow those laws. Herein is the wonder, the marvel of love: that God, who needeth not creation, should by a free act, or rather an infinity of free acts, of condescension, create, uphold, provide for, bear in His fatherly care, all the great family of the universe.

II. In the order of the history of creation the various ranks of being, beginning from the lowest, proceed onwards to the highest; but we must not therefore for a moment dream, as some have done, of a gradual progression upwards of being, through the lower to the higher. The higher ranks in God's creation have ever been that which we find them in their laws and character, and have not evolved themselves out of the lower.

III. To say that beauty, and order, and adaptation reign through all these ranks of being is no more than to repeat an often-told tale. (1) Observe, first, the consummate beauty of God's arrangements in regard to mute, unorganised matter, from the grand but simple law which retains the planets in their orbits to that which forms the hidden crystals in the depths of the mine, or the frostwork on the window-pane, which melts with the first sunbeam. All is full of subjects for wonder and admiration. (2) Let us rise one step, and from unorganised matter come to organic life. Life, the special gift of God, is not the result of any combination of matter. Every portion of the frame in which it resides might be reproduced by art, but the beautiful model must wait for vitality till it is breathed down from the Creator Himself. There is no part of the earth but is full of animal life, no animal that is not a study inexhaustible in its proofs of creative wisdom and providing love. It has often struck me that the more we think of the utter incapability of the lower tribes of creation for increase of knowledge and skill, and compare it with their perfect knowledge and skill in that which is given them to do, the more do we see the

present and acting power and love of God. They are so helpless, yet so full of needful resources; so unconscious of wisdom, yet so wise; so reckless of the future, yet so provident; so incapable of high motives, yet so self-devoted in their affections, that it appears to me that between these extremes in the same beings, so wonderful, so inexplicable, there must come in, living, and moving, and present day by day, the will of that gracious Father, the love of that Divine Son, the working of that blessed Spirit of wisdom, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, whose tender mercies are over all His works.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 18.

REFERENCES: cxlv. 9.—E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 250. cxlv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1796; J. A. Sellar, *Church Doctrine and Practice*, p. 318.

Psalm cxlv., vers. 10, 11 (Prayer-book version).—"**All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord: and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee. They shew the glory of Thy kingdom: and talk of Thy power.**"

THE Christian Church is a *living* body, and *one*, not a mere framework artificially arranged to look like one. Its being alive is what makes it one; were it dead, it would consist of as many parts as it has members: but the living Spirit of God came down upon it at Pentecost, and made it one by giving it life.

I. The Church, properly considered, is that great company of the elect which has been separated by God's free grace, and His Spirit working in due season, from this sinful world, regenerated, and vouchsafed perseverance unto life eternal. Viewed so far as it merely consists of persons now living in this world, it is of course a visible company; but in its nobler and truer character it is a body invisible, or nearly so, as being made up not merely of the few who happen to be still on their trial, but of the many who sleep in the Lord. This invisible body is the true Church, because it changes not, though it is ever increasing. Such is the efficacy of that inexhaustible grace which Christ has lodged in His Church, as a principle of life and increase, until He comes again. The expiring breath of His saints is but the quickening of dead souls.

II. These thoughts are very different from the world's ordinary view of things, which walks by sight, not by faith. When the souls of Christians pass from it into the place of spirits, it fancies that this is their loss, not its own. It pities them, too, as thinking that they do not witness the termination

of what they began or saw beginning, that they are ignorant of the fortunes of their friends or of the Church, or rather careless about them; as being insensible and but shadows, and ghosts, not substances, as if we who live were the real agents in the course of events, and they were attached to us only as a churchyard to a church, which it is decent to respect, unsuitable to linger in. Such is its opinion of the departed; yet with the views opened on us in the Gospel, with the knowledge that the one Spirit of Christ ever abides, and that those who are made one with Him are never parted from Him, and that those who die in Him are irrevocably knit into Him and one with Him, shall we dare to think slightingly of these indefectible members of Christ and vessels of future glory? Shall we not dimly recognise amid the aisles of our churches and along our cloisters, about our ancient tombs and in ruined and desolate places, which once were held sacred not in cold poetical fancy, but by the eye of faith, the spirits of our fathers and brethren of every time, past and present, whose works have long been "known" to God, and whose former dwelling-places remain among us, pledges, as we trust, that He will not utterly forsake us and make an end?

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 168.

REFERENCE: cxlv. 13.—Bishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876, p. 159.

Psalm cxlv., vers. 13, 14.—"Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down."

WHAT we admire in these verses is their combining the magnificence of unlimited power with the assiduity of unlimited tenderness. The greatness of God is often turned into an argument by which men would bring doubt on the truths of redemption and providence.

I. An argument is attempted to be drawn from the insignificance of man to the improbability of redemption; one verse of our text is set against the other: and the confessed fact that God's dominion is throughout all generations is opposed to the alleged fact that He gave His own Son that He might lift up the fallen. But it ought at least to be remembered that man was God's workmanship made after His image, and endowed with powers which fitted him for lofty pursuits. The human race may or may not be insignificant. No one can survey the

works of nature and not perceive that God has some regard for the children of men, however fallen and polluted they may be. And if God manifest a regard for us in temporal things, it must be far from incredible that He would do the same in spiritual.

II. It is in regard to the doctrine of a universal providence that men are most ready to raise objections from the greatness of God as contrasted with their own insignificance. They cannot believe that He who is so mighty as to rule the heavenly hosts can condescend to notice the wants of the meanest of His creatures. (1) This reasoning betrays ignorance as to what it is in which greatness consists. It may be that amongst finite beings it is not easy, and perhaps not possible, that attention to what is minute or comparatively unimportant should be combined with attention to things of vast moment. But we never reckon it an excellence that there is not, or cannot be, this union. On the contrary, we should declare that man at the very summit of true greatness who proved himself able to unite what had seemed incompatible. We know not why that should be derogatory to the majesty of the Ruler of the universe which, by the general confession, would add immeasurably to the majesty of one of the earth's potentates. (2) Objections against the doctrine of God's providence are virtually objections against the great truths of creation. What it was not unworthy of God to form, it cannot be unworthy of God to preserve. Why declare anything excluded by its insignificance from His watchfulness which could not have been produced but by His power? The universal providence of God is little more than an inference from the truth of His being the universal Creator. (3) The doctrine of a universal providence is strictly derivable from the very nature of God. It is to bring God down to the feebleness of our own estate to suppose that what is great to us must be great to Him, and that what is small to us must be small to Him. Dwelling as God does in inaccessible splendours, a world is to Him an atom, and an atom is to Him a world. It is thus virtually the property of God that He should care for everything and sustain everything, so that we should never behold a blade of grass springing up from the earth, nor hear a bird warble its wild music, nor see an infant slumber on its mother's breast without a warm memory that it is through God as a God of providence that the fields are enamelled in due season, that every animated tribe receives its sustenance, and that the successive

generations of mankind arise, and flourish, and possess the earth.

H. MELVILL, *Sermons before the University of Cambridge*, p. 1.

REFERENCE: cxlv. 15, 16.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 261.

Psalm cxlv., vers. 15-17.—"The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing," etc.

I. CONSIDER, first, the Psalmist's assertion, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." The Psalmist here uses the language of faith. The word "righteousness" as used of God denotes that necessary perfection by which God is most holy and just in Himself, and observes the strictest rules of equity in His every dealing with His creatures. To be convinced, then, that God is righteous, is to be convinced that, whatever may be the appearance, He is guided in all His actions by the most unimpeachable principles, and has only to make known His reasons to secure the approval of all holy beings. Be it so that the dealings of our Maker are unsearchable, our business is not to penetrate these dealings, but whilst they bear us along as a ship is borne upon the waves to keep looking, as David elsewhere says, "to the hills, from whence cometh our help." There is not a billow of this deep from which you may not see land, some peak of the mountains, if you will, as it were, rest in the ship, though if you attempt to dive beneath the surface you will find only darkness, and be presently overwhelmed. Make it your constant rule never to contemplate God's dealings apart from God's attributes, but always to prepare for musing on the dealings by musing on the attributes, and David's experience will be your own.

II. The doubts and difficulties which consideration of God's dealings will necessarily excite will best be dealt with by pondering the everyday mercies which are showered upon the world. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee," etc. There is not in this creation a single living thing which is not perpetually drawing upon God, and so literally dependent on His care and bounty that a moment's suspension of His operations would suffice to extinguish its vital principle. Who can fear that, because God's ways are unsearchable, they may not be all tending to the final good of His creatures, when he knows that, with the tenderness of a most affectionate parent, this Creator and Governor ministers to the meanest living thing? Who can distrust God, because clouds and darkness are round about

Him, when there is light enough to show that He is the vigilant Guardian of every tenant of this earth, that His hand upholds, and His breath animates, and His bounty nourishes the teeming hordes of the city, and the desert, and the ocean? "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2085.

REFERENCES: cxlv. 16.—J. J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1823. cxlv. 18.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 1st series, p. 128. cxlv. 18, 19.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 86. cxlvi. 1-3.—R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 1.

Psalm cxlvi., ver. 4.—"In that very day his thoughts perish."

I. ON the "day" that is here referred to, when man's "breath goeth forth, and he returneth to the earth," the most affecting aspect in which you can look at him is that which is here presented. So far as the present life is concerned, and to all appearance, he has ceased to be a person, and has become a thing.

II. All the thinkings of men that are not really and thoroughly true, however beautiful and magnificent they may be, and whatever favour they may find with their parents or with man, to whom they are presented—when men come to die, they will find that they all perish and become nothing if they are not true; when the mind enters into the world of truth, pure truth and intellect, it will find it can carry nothing but truth with it.

III. We may apply this passage to purposes, projects, and intentions: "In that very day his thoughts perish."

We learn from this subject: (1) the very great importance to be attached to getting our minds filled with real truth, God's own truth; (2) the vast superiority of anything that is really done to anything that is merely thought.

T. BINNEY, *King's Weighhouse Chapel Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 246.

REFERENCES: cxlvi. 4.—C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 131. cxlvi. 6.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., pp. 177, 209. cxlvi. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 484.

Psalm cxlvii., ver. 1.—"Praise is comely."

CONSIDER the glory and the use of the Book of Psalms.

I. Think, first, of the rareness and preciousness of that unique gift to the Church. The Hebrew's characteristic was his religion, and not his literature. The Hebrew race left behind it a trophy corresponding to this characteristic. It was not a

code of laws, embodying the great issues of justice, though Moses was of the seed of Abraham. It was not a volume of poetry, to whose immortal pages the centuries add imperishable beauty; at least, it was not a volume of poetry as such. It was something more unusual. If we measure the preciousness of products by their reality, then prayers are the most precious of all products. So rare and unique is the Book of Psalms.

II. Note some of the general uses of the Psalter. (1) The Psalms bring out with unapproachable practical influence the idea of a living, personal God, the Creator, and Judge, and Friend of men; His moral character; the whole body of truths rightly or wrongly termed natural religion. (2) The Psalms bring out as nothing else can the ideal of spiritual religion. (*a*) They show us that religion's exceeding great reward is in itself. (*b*) They tell us that man's spiritual ideal is not in its essence formal or ceremonial. (*c*) They show, as a feature of the spiritual character unknown to all other religions, a deep, abiding sense of sinfulness; a holiness arising not from effort, but from conscience feeling a burden and faith laying it upon a Saviour.

III. The Psalms are a proof of the existence of the Divine world, just as music is the proof of the existence of a world of harmony. We possess aspirations beyond our present needs. They will never read man truly who forget that he bears within a spiritual prophecy, as truly as he bears without a natural history. Of this prophecy the Psalms are the accumulated utterances. They tell us that even if the tree of humanity, embedded in the soil of myriad ages, has roots that go down lower than the "cabin of the savage," to "the lair of the brute," yet aloft it has tendrils that stretch themselves upwards towards the light of immortality. "I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand." "This God is our God for ever and ever; He shall be our Guide unto death."

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *The Great Question*, p. 238.

REFERENCES: cxlvii. 1.—A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 335. cxlvii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1302.

Psalm cxlvii., vers. 2-5.—"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel," etc.

THE text reveals the constructive side of Divine government:—

I. As shown in the building up of the Church. That He

should do so shows: (1) that the Church is self-demolished; (2) that it is self-helpless; (3) that God is the Gatherer, the Redeemer, and the Builder of the Church.

II. As seen in the gentle care of human hearts. Learn from this: (1) the personality of God's knowledge; (2) the infinite adaptations of Divine grace; (3) the perfectness of Divine healing.

III. As seen in the order, the regularity, and the stability of creation. (1) God takes care of the great universe; may I not trust Him with my life? (2) Where God's will is unquestioned, the result is light, beauty, music; why should I oppose myself to its gracious dominion?

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 217 (see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 197).

REFERENCE: cxlvii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 53.

Psalm cxlvii., vers. 7, 8 (Prayer-book version).—"O sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving: sing praises upon the harp unto our God; who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth," etc.

WE might almost assert that this Psalm was composed in spring. Spring, as Eastern travellers tell us, comes with a suddenness and beauty in that bare land of Palestine that we can hardly conceive of. All at once the dry, stony hills are clad with the tenderest green, the flowers fill the fields, and the heavens drop down dew.

I. But whether composed in spring or not, the hundred and forty-seventh Psalm may teach us a great lesson: a lesson of thankfulness; a lesson of acknowledgment to God for His care—for His care of all His creatures, cattle and birds as well as man. The gratitude that is acceptable to God is the offering of a just, and merciful, and humble life—an offering that God loves better than any other service, which in His sight is more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

II. Let us learn from this season to have trust and confidence in God. Let us love to mark in what we see now the care of God for all His creatures. Not all the cunning of man could make a single blade of grass, or cause one leaf to come out of its sheath, or one flower to bud and bloom. Think of the witness which spring bears to the providence and love of God.

III. Let us learn from the present season at least a hint about our immortal destiny. A few weeks ago, and all nature seemed dead. The trees were leafless; the ground was bare;

there was no song of birds in the air. But now there is life, visible and joyous life, all around us. The earth has had her Easter, and is risen. And shall not we see in this a type and parable of our own resurrection? Shall it not help in its degree to confirm the blessed hope that we shall live though we die; that death is not the end of our being?

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 2nd series, p. 41.

REFERENCES: cxlvii. 7-9.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 317. cxlvii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 672. cxlvii. 12.—J. A. Sellar, *Church Doctrine and Practice*, p. 188. cxlvii. 14, 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 314. cxlvii. 15.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., No. 1607.

Psalm cxlvii., ver. 16.—**"He giveth snow like wool."**

I. LOOK, first, at the beauty of the snow. It makes a spiritual world of this dull, dark earth of ours; and the fields that seemed fit only for the growth of man's food and the tread of weary feet in the common labours of life, covered with its white, immaculate carpet, look like a celestial floor, on which white-winged angels on lofty errands of mercy might alight from the kindred heavens. The snow-crystals are the blossoms of inorganic nature. Their beauty is not a chance endowment. It is God's Hall-mark, attesting that the work is His. Such beauty is a reflection of the Divine image, not something that God does, but something that He is, really and suitably a part of Himself. It awakens that curiosity about God which is an essential element of worship. He who arranged the particles of snow into such exquisite shapes of beauty can bring order out of our confusion, and change our vile bodies and spirits into the likeness of Christ's.

II. Look at the power of the snow. In a few hours God's little army of snowflakes does a work which defies all the resources of man to undo it, and before which he has to pause baffled and defeated.

III. Look, further, at the service of the snow. "He giveth snow like wool," says the psalmist. The comparison expressively indicates one of the most important purposes which the snow serves in the economy of nature. It covers the earth like a blanket during that period of winter sleep which is necessary to recruit its exhausted energies and prepare it for fresh efforts in spring. He who warms the tender latent life of the flowers by the snow, and moulds the quiet beauty of the summer landscape by the desolating glacier, makes the cold of adversity to

cherish the life of the soul, and to round into spiritual loveliness the harshness and roughness of a carnal, selfish nature.

IV. Look at the Giver of the snow. The psalmist had not the shadow of a doubt that God formed and sent the annual miracle of snow, as He had formed and sent the daily miracle of manna in the desert. It was a commonplace thing; it was a natural, ordinary occurrence; but it had the Divine sign upon it, and it showed forth the glory and goodness of God as strikingly as the most wonderful supernatural event in his nation's history.

H. MACMILLAN, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 269.

FOUR attributes of God find their illustration and plain exhibition in the snow:—

I. His omnipresence. Each one of these drifting flakes is a present from God. "He giveth snow like wool." (1) Sometimes it seems as if we were less observant of Divine handiwork in nature than the early Christians used to be. (2) Sometimes it seems as if we were most absurdly concerned lest the dignity of God should not be preserved in the minute management of things. (3) Sometimes it seems as if we were positively afraid to put God in peril by admitting that He is personally responsible for all His universe. It has invariably happened that the more clear are the expositions of trustworthy science, the safer is the Bible.

II. God's beneficence finds an illustration in the snow. (1) The philosophy of God's benediction in these bewildering flakes carries with it an interesting surprise. We are wont to associate cold only with a winter's depth of snow; but snow keeps the ground from freezing, and so preserves the life of seeds and trees. (2) The argument from this has two branches: it demands implicit confidence in God; it counsels generous remembrance of others around us.

III. The gentleness of God finds an illustration in the falling of the snow. Thus always appears God's gentleness: (1) in nature; (2) in providence; (3) in grace; (4) in retribution. "The feet of the avenging deities are shod with wool," says the classic poet. "He giveth snow like wool," says the text.

IV. The holiness of God finds a fitting illustration in the snow. Snow has been chosen as the symbol: (1) of the Gospel of redemption. "As the snow cometh down from heaven, so shall My word be," etc. (2) Of the standard of complete

sanctification. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be "white as snow." (3) Of ultimate attainment in grace. Jesus' robe of righteousness is absolutely white. (4) Of faith's final reward. Three distinct visions of God as He appears in heaven have been vouchsafed on earth to mortal eyes: one to Daniel in Babylon, one to Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, and one to John on the Isle of Patmos. These men all put on record what in that supreme moment they saw. They differ in some particulars, but the one thing they all noticed was the raiment of glorious apparel which was worn by the exalted Redeemer. The glistering garments, such as no fuller could whiten them, they thought made up the supernatural beauty of heaven itself. "His garment was white as snow."

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 49.

REFERENCES: cxlvii. 16, 17.—W. Simpson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 40; W. G. Horder, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 76. cxlvii. 16-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 670. cxlvii. 17.—H. Macmillan, *Bible Teachings in Nature*, p. 27.

Psalm cxlvii., ver. 18.—"He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow."

THERE are two lessons taught in these words:—

I. God works by means. God makes all the means, and then uses them as He sees good. God is not obliged to work by means. Sometimes, as we learn from the Bible, He is pleased to work miracles, just to show us His power and teach us that all things obey His will. But that is very seldom. Most things God does by using the proper means, not because He is obliged, but because it is the best and wisest plan, and He has made all things on purpose.

II. All things do God's will, just as much as if He did everything by miracle—all *things*. But do all people? Do you? Can you say that you obey all that God tells you in His word as swiftly and as perfectly as the snow melts before the fire? Alas! no. Nobody can say this, for even when we try our best to please God we find that we fail; and our obedience is imperfect, just as if the snow were only half to melt, and be all mixed up with little bits of warm ice that refused to melt. God wishes you to obey Him not as the snow, and winds, and clouds, and sunshine obey Him—because they cannot help it—but willingly, because you love Him.

E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 70.

REFERENCE: cxlvii.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 323.

Psalm cxlviii., ver. 7 (with Rev. xv., ver. 3).—"Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling His word."

THE highest forms under which we can now think are art-forms: the proportions of statuary and architecture, the colour of painting and music. The former are limited, and address a mere sense of beauty; but music addresses the heart, and has its vocation amongst the feelings, and covers their whole range. Hence music has been chosen to hold and express our conception of moral perfection. Nor is it an arbitrary choice, but is made for the reasons that music is the utterance of the heart, it is an expression of morality, and it is an infinite language. Before the sneer at heaven as a place of endless song can prevail, it must undo all this stout logic of the human heart. We so represent it because when we frame our conception of heaven or moral perfection we find certain things, and when we look into the nature and operation of music we find the same things; namely, obedience, sympathy, emotion, and adoration.

I. Obedience. The idea that is fastest gaining ground in all departments of thought is that of the reign of law—law always and everywhere, and nothing without its range. But under what art-form shall we express this? for expression we must have. There is an exactness in the laws of harmony that makes obedience to them specially fine and so fit to be a type of it. The pleasure we feel in music springs from the obedience which is in it, and it is full only as the obedience is entire.

II. Music is, beyond all other arts, the expression and vehicle of sympathy. No other art, no other mode of impression, equals music in its power to awaken a common feeling. The orator approaches it, but he deals chiefly with convictions; and conviction is a slow and hard path to feeling, while music makes a direct appeal. The united action of the full chorus and orchestra is a perfect transcript, down to the last and finest particular, of perfected human society.

III. Music as an expression of feeling is a prophecy of that grander exercise of our nature for which we hope. It is the nature of feeling to express itself. Thought may stay behind silent lips; but when it becomes feeling, it runs to expression. Music is an illustration of this law of our emotions, and is the natural expression of deep feeling. History all along culminates in song. The summits of Jewish history from Miriam to David are vocal with psalms. In some supernal sense, music will be the vocation of humanity when its full redemption is

come. The summit of existence is feeling, the summit of character is sympathy, and music is the art-form that links them together.

IV. Music is the truest and most nearly adequate expression of the religious emotions, and so becomes prophetic of the destiny of man as a religious being. Music is creatively designed for religion, and not for anything else. It lends itself to almost every human feeling, down to the vilest, but always with suppression of its power. It is not until it is used for the expression of that wide range of feeling which we call religious that it discloses its full powers. Music is the art-path to God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

T. T. MUNGER, *The Appeal to Life*, p. 309.

REFERENCES: cxlix. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 963; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 266. cxlix. 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 98; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 115; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 120.

Psalm cxlviii., ver. 8 (Prayer-book version).—"Wind and storm fulfilling His word."

I. "FULFILLING His word." Somehow or other, then, His word is fulfilled in the devastation and disfigurement of that which His own hands have made; and the agent which inflicts it obeys some law as regular as that which governs the motion of a planet, although with more complex conditions. In the view of Him who sees all that has been, that is, that will be, there is beyond the immediate present the illimitable future; and in some way this present ruin most assuredly is preparing for that future. And, still more, behind the seen and the visible world there is the world invisible and moral; and, in ways which we do not suspect as yet, its high requirements may be, must be, thus provided for.

II. As we pass from the physical and inanimate world and enter the human, the spiritual, and the moral, the storm and wind become metaphorical expressions, having, however, real counterparts in the passions and the agency of man. Here, too, as elsewhere, we watch them fulfilling God's word. (1) The State is exposed to the storm of invasion and the storm of revolution. (2) The Church is exposed to the storm of persecution and of controversy. (3) The individual life is assailed by outward troubles and by inward storms of difficulty and doubt as to religious truth. Loyalty to known truth is the warrant of endurance among all the trials that may await us, that endurance which transforms the very fiercest blast into tender

fulfilment of God's word of promise to those who are the special objects of His love.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 25.

REFERENCE: cxlviii. 11-13.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 261.

Psalm cxlviii., ver. 12.—"Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord."

I. THINK what it is to praise the Lord. Praise is the heart singing. When the love of our hearts is set on Jesus, the gladness goes with us everywhere: at home or at school, at work or at play.

II. Notice some reasons why we should all thus praise the Lord. (1) Because He has loved us and given Himself for us. (2) We are the only creatures in the world that can praise Him. (3) Praise is the only thing we can give to the Lord. (4) Loving praise is the only thing that can satisfy our loving Lord. (5) Everybody ought to praise the Lord now, because it is the happy work that we shall do in heaven.

M. G. PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 121.

REFERENCES: cxlviii. 12.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 70. cxlviii. 12, 13.—G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 64. cxlviii. 14—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 138; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 261.

Psalm cxlix., ver. 9.—"This honour have all His saints."

I. THE saints are in this Psalm described as meek-hearted. The way to the highest glory is to be very quiet and humble. "The Lord hath pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with salvation."

II. The next verses go on to describe more exactly the beauty and brightness of the saints' marvellous salvation. They are to be filled with all joy and glory, but how? Not, as the honoured ones of this world, with a great noise and show of outward things; but they shall rejoice and "sing aloud upon their beds." It seems to say that one great privilege of the saints, one of the principal ways in which Almighty God prepares them for the great works which He has for them to do, is the putting good thoughts and good words into their minds in quiet and secret, when they are alone and unemployed, or lying awake upon their beds.

III. In the remainder of the Psalm we have a picture of the great war which is for ever going on between our Lord Christ and His saints on the one hand and this present evil world on the

other. As warriors go out to battle with music and songs of encouragement, so the saints go out into the world with the high praises of God in their mouth. Besides, they have His two-edged sword in their hands. St. Paul tells us what this sword is; it is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" therefore it is represented as coming out of Christ's mouth. Not by outward wars and fightings, but by its inward and searching power in men's hearts, did the sword of Christ, borne by His saints, accomplish those great triumphs which are spoken of in the end of the Psalm.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Saints' Days and Other Festivals*, p. 444.

Psalm cl., vers. 1-3, 6 (Prayer-book version).—"O praise God in His holiness: praise Him in the firmament of His power," etc.

I. CONSIDER the nature of praise. (1) From such passages as Isa. vi. 1—3, Rev. iv. 8, xiv. 1—3, we collect with certainty thus much: that praise is the main element of the homage of saints and angels in the eternal world. And indeed it is difficult to imagine what besides it could be. The worship which created beings render to the Almighty is divisible into two acts: prayer and praise. But from the nature of the case the spirits of the blessed can hardly be considered as having occasion for the former. With the necessities of the saints, their prayers, as far as regards themselves, must have an end; but, on the contrary, the passing away of these necessities will itself minister occasion for the commencement of an unbroken service of praise. From the simple fact that prayer is the religious exercise of those still in the flesh, and praise the employment of the redeemed from among men, we seem at once to deduce the greater nobility of praise itself. (2) The perfection of praise is not found in thanksgiving. We are to thank God not for what He has done for us, but for what He is. Praise is the travelling forth of the mind into the depths of the Divine nature; it is the folding of the mantle around us, so as to shut out the visible creation, and to be alive only to the sense of the uncreated Majesty.

II. Consider the application of music to the purposes of praise. (1) Whatever has a tendency to withdraw the mind from care must promote in a measure the disposition required for praise. (2) All along God has recognised the principle of making religion a visible, tangible thing. Adam possessed in

paradise a perfect nature, and what was his religion? Essentially a sacramental one. He was to refrain from the fruit of one tree and systematically eat of another to secure his immortality. If ever outward rites could be dispensed with, surely they might have been in paradise, with the creature so elevated and God so near; and yet even there an outward sign was made to accompany inward grace. Just in the same way with music as a help to praise. We grant that the mind which without extrinsic aid can rise to the level of this great employment is more angelic than that which must be stimulated by luxury of sound; but are we therefore to neglect a means which God has furnished of elevating the weak, and warming the cold, and carrying away, in spite of itself, the earthly heart?

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Sermons in Various Churches*, p. 283.

Psalm cl., ver. 6.—"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

CONSIDER in what praise consists, what are its elements, or rather from what source it flows.

I. It arises from a consciousness of blessings already received, as, for example, the gift of regeneration, the grace of conversion, the spirit of repentance, the spiritual food of the body and blood of Christ, and the numberless, and therefore nameless, blessings and gifts of this world and the next, both for the body and for the soul, of which our life is full. The spirit of conscious gratitude consists in a watchful, minute attention to the particulars of our state, and to the multitude of God's gifts, taken one by one. It fills us with a consciousness that God loves and cares for us, even to the least event and smallest need of life; and that we actually have received, and do now possess as our own, gifts which come direct from God.

II. Another source of praise is a sense of our own unworthiness. To receive blessings as if they were no more than we might expect betrays a strange unconsciousness of what we are, and of what they imply. Every blessing is to us as the ring and the best robe which were given to the prodigal: a token of forgiveness and fatherly compassion. The more conscious we are of our unworthiness, the larger will God's gifts appear, the more full of all kinds of sweetness. It is this that fills the humble with such especial joy.

III. This sense of unworthiness opens another, and that the highest, source of praise: the pure love of God. The pure love of God is to love Him as He loves us, freely, because He is

love. God is the desired end of love, as the running brook is of thirst. Here is the true fountain of praise and worship, love ascending out of self to rejoice in God. This is the meaning of the psalmist. Let all created life bow itself before the majesty of God, before the beauty of holiness, the glory of uncreated love. "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." (1) Praise is a sacrifice most acceptable in the sight of God. (2) Praise is most blessed for us. To live in a spirit of praise is to live a life as near to heaven as earth can be.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 276.

REFERENCES: cl. 6.—Bishop Ryle, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 1; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 371.

THE PSALMS.

WITH a few exceptions, the recorded songs of David bear unmistakable signs of the poet's youth. The chief poet of the Hebrew Psalter is undoubtedly the young shepherd, and not the aged ruler, the fugitive outcast, battling for safety and position, and not the serenely victorious monarch, swaying an unquestioned sceptre far and near. David's life enforces the special service of song in the building up of religious character.

I. Whether David's songs were composed early or late, every one has seen that the majority of this sweet singer's effusions are the songs of a sufferer, who sings for the convincing reason that he must, if only to soothe his perplexities and calm the agitations of his soul. No singer reaches his best till he sings, in language that thrills and inspires the soul, the eternal gospel, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God: believe also in Christ"—believe also in duty, in progress, in heaven. But for such a mission the singer must, like David, be a sufferer. It is the school of sorrow that makes poets.

II. It is a unique sign of a Davidic psalm that it is always a real and bold communion with the living and loving personal God. Every poem is a sacrifice. Every line throbs with love. Every verse is a word to God. The aid of Biblical song in communion with God is the highest claim the Psalter has upon the gratitude and love of man.

III. Such, however, are the manifold fascinations and various uses of the Psalter, that possibly as many minds are won and held by its interpretation of life as by its help in

fellowship with God. David sees life as it is, and sees it wholly, what is above it, and around it, and beyond it, as well as what is in it; hears what it says; and reads what it means.

IV. We often talk about proofs of inspiration. Might we not intelligently rest our whole case on this ministry of Bible song? Judged only by the clear thought they create, the pure emotion they kindle, the love of right they inflame, the energy they infuse, the Psalms are positively unmatched in the whole literary expression of the world. Like magnets, they have attracted to the acceptance of the highest ideals, and sustained the bravest as they have forgotten what was behind and striven to reach the mark of the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The family has been sanctified by their purity, the weary refreshed by their sweetness, and the hopeless revived by their light. Old and young, the living and the dying, have drunk from this perennial fount of the waters of everlasting life, and lived for evermore.

J. CLIFFORD, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 181.

PROVERBS.

Chap. i., ver. 1.—"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel."

THE Book of the Proverbs of Solomon is a collection, under the guidance of inspiration, of the short sayings of wise and pious men which up to that time had been more or less current, with many of course of his own intermixed. When we have them before us, we seem to have an insight into the minds of the very wisest of men, we almost commune with them, and know the point of view in which they regarded human life and all its affairs.

I. We see the estimate they formed of human nature, its weakness and corruption. How full the Book of Proverbs is of the folly of mankind!

II. Again, what a vast collection of sayings we have in this book relating to human life, to human duty: the fear of God, charity to man, modesty, humility, forbearance, industry, self-denial! Here we see that another plain use and design of the whole book is to give us a quantity of short and summary expressions of deep truths of practice, such as we can carry about with us and call to mind when we want them. This book will imprint upon our minds the great truths of God's providence and the profundity of God's judgment. The Proverbs show Divine justice already partially commenced and exhibited in this life; and the Gospel carries out this view, and completes it in the world of futurity.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 96.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth*, 1st series, p. 9; J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 89; R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on the Book of Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 1.

Chap. i., vers. 1-4.—"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding," etc.

IT might seem at first as if no precepts of this kind, drawn from the experience of a social state most unlike our own, could be of

much service to us. But much that is true of man at any time is true at all times. The counsels of the teacher look forwards rather than backwards. With but little change of outward circumstance, they are true even now. Their inner, substantial truth can never become obsolete.

I. (1) The first great danger against which the young man is warned on his entrance upon life is that of wild, lawless robbery. Still the tempter leads men captive at once by their covetousness and their weakness. (2) And so also of that which we have come to speak of as pre-eminently the sin of great cities, the evil which spreads over and corrupts every form of civilised society. Vivid as the picture was of what was seen in Jerusalem "in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night," it might almost seem to have been photographed from the streets of London. (3) Indolence, self-sufficiency, cowardice—where can we find these portrayed in more vivid colours than here?

II. Having seen that the perils of life were the same, you will be able to recognise also the identity of the excellence presented to the youth of Israel and the youth of Christendom for their admiration. That ideal is at once noble and attainable. It meets men in their homes and in their work, in the market-place and in the council-chamber, and bids them be wise, and righteous, and blessed there.

III. Through all excellences in man or woman there runs that which is the source and condition of them all, even the fear of the Lord.

IV. Such a life, having this root, bearing such fruits, is noble and honourable at all times. The wisdom of the Old Testament presented it as the true pattern for men to aim at. The wisdom of the New Testament does not reject it. But we should stop short of the whole counsel of God if we were to stop here. Wisdom manifested in the flesh, the Son of God, who was also the Son of man, has in word and act, by precept and example, disclosed a height and a depth beyond even this excellence.

E. H. PLUMPTRE, *Theology and Life*, p. 184.

REFERENCE: i. 2-9.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on the Book of Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 10.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"To understand a proverb, and the interpretation."

A GREAT deal of the world's wisdom is contained in proverbs. But it must be allowed that some of the world's proverbs are

faulty and imperfect, and therefore unsafe rules for a Christian to follow. The proverbs of Solomon are all good and holy in their tendency. How could they be otherwise, proceeding as they do from the good and Holy Spirit of God?

I. The book commences with the "fear of the Lord" as the root of the whole matter. Everything else without this is of no avail. If we have not learned to acknowledge God, to set Him before us, to be in His fear, we know nothing yet as we ought to know it. (1) The fear of God will urge us to a profitable study of the Holy Scriptures. (2) The fear of God will especially influence us in our devotions. (3) The fear of God will bring us to the business of the day in the right frame of mind to carry it on. (4) The fear of God will enable us to bear the trials and disappointments of life. (5) In the last trial of all, in the hour of death, we shall assuredly reap the fruit of having lived in the fear of the Lord, for then we shall have nothing else to fear.

II. Another proverb addresses itself especially to the young: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." The dutiful son, the loving daughter, are characters that find favour in the sight of God and man. If the young would have the Lord's favour, they must seek it in the paths of duty and obedience; and there, by God's grace, they shall find it.

III. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." In other words, avoid bad company. Take care that your pleasures are innocent pleasures; take care that they are such as do not leave a sting behind.

J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 414.

Reference: i. 6.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 1.

Chap. i., ver. 7.—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

I understand by the fear of the Lord an abiding and reverent sense of the presence of God and of accountableness to him. And in order for this to exist, God must not be the creature of each man's imagination, a fiction adapted to each man's prejudices and caprice, but that real, personal Being which we have every reason to believe God to have revealed Himself to be, such in character, as to love, holiness, and justice, as He has declared Himself in His word.

I. The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, because knowledge, being the apprehension of facts and application of them to life, cannot properly begin, or be placed on a right

foundation, without first apprehending and applying a fact which includes and which modifies all other facts whatever.

II. Knowledge is the food of the soul. The knowledge which is to train the soul must begin, continue, and end in the apprehension of God—of God as first, and of all other things as He has made them to be to us exponents of, and testimonies to, Himself.

III. A third and no less powerful reason is this: knowledge, understood as the mere accumulation of facts, is inoperative upon life. If knowledge is to be of any real use to help and renovate man, the affections must be wrought upon at the very outset of teaching. There is but one personal Agent whose influence and presence can abide through life, can alike excite hope, and fear, and love in the infant, in the child, in the youth, in the man, in the aged, and on the bed of death; and that One is God Himself. Unless He be known first and known throughout, knowledge will abide alone in the head, and will not find a way to the heart: man will know, but will not grow by it; will know, but will not act upon it; will know for narrow, and low, and selfish purposes, but never for blessing to himself or to others, never for the great ends of his being and never for glory to his God. The fear of the Lord is not a barren fact, like the shape of the earth or the course of the seasons; it is a living, springing, transmuting affection, capable of enduing even ordinary facts with power to cheer and to bless, and to bear fruit in men's hearts and lives.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 1.

REFERENCE: i. 7.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 19.

Chap. i., vers. 7-9.—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother," etc.

SOLOMON grounds the fear of God, the basis of the whole religious life, upon the duty of obedience to parents.

I. It is not mere children to whom he is speaking; he is addressing young persons who have come to that period of life at which they can go wrong if they will, when the actual restraint of parents is past.

II. It is the mark of a young person being very much fallen from the safe narrow path, when he allows himself to be tempted, whether in company or in his own heart, to be ashamed or think lightly of the law of his father and his mother. If the lessons of childhood which we learn from our

mothers be really and truly the most valuable that we ever do learn, is not Solomon right in speaking of him as in the true road to wisdom who reverences the law of his mother, and wears it with pride as a precious chain about his neck, and in declaring, on the other hand, the folly and wickedness of him who despises his mother's lessons?

III. That habit of mind which is indicated by the figure of the text is the habit of mind which leads to all high and noble feelings. Give me a man who has shown himself in all respects a good and dutiful son, and I have very little fear that he will be a good member of society, a loyal subject of the Queen, a man of open and honourable heart, a good husband, and a good father. This will be the case because excellence in all these conditions of life requires the same simplicity of heart, the same unselfishness, the same practical wisdom, and the same obedience to the behests of gratitude and of conscience which the keeping of the Fifth Commandment requires.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 262.

REFERENCES: i. 8.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 25. i. 9.—*Ibid.*, p. 30.

Chap. i., ver. 10.—"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

THERE are two chief sources of temptation which Solomon indicates in these chapters, and which, when we have stripped off the figure or the accidental circumstances of age and time, are not less applicable to our days than to his.

I. The first is sensuality, figured and summed up in that repeated picture of the "strange woman which flattereth with her tongue, which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God."

II. The other is that of evil companionship.

You may see in chap. ii. the two distinguished very clearly and put as the two things from which wisdom, discretion, understanding, should preserve you.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." The particular sins to which Solomon imagines the young man as being enticed are not at the moment sins of sensuality, but sins of violence. He is invited to join, to throw in his lot with, a band of brigands or highwaymen. The words describe the temptation to sin offered by companionship—sin of lawlessness, sin of daring, sin of cruelty, and sin of injustice. There is the natural temptation to go with a multitude, to feel that we are in the stream. There are the subtle temptations, which make use

in part of our better nature, to adventure, to braving risk, to standing by companions. It may be a little matter at first, a youthful freak, but it will be defended presently by falsehood; and will they have the courage to draw back then? "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 216.

I. LOOK, first, at the case supposed. (1) It is a common case. Sinners *do* entice. It is the nature of sin to make men tempters one of another. Men do not like to sin alone. Sinfulness begets a spirit of mischief; and if a man injures himself, he desires to see somebody else injured. (2) It is a serious case. Generally speaking, the tempters are stronger than the tempted. Temptation, when it is presented, is presented to a nature more or less susceptible. To be enticed is to be in danger of yielding to the inducement and of falling into sin. This is a serious case, but (3) it is by no means a hopeless one. "Consent thou not."

II. Notice the advice given. (1) Without consent the temptation cannot take effect, and without consent the temptation can do no real harm. (2) "Consent thou not," for if you do consent, "be sure your sin will find you out."

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 17.

THIS verse, in brief compass and transparent terms, reveals the foe and the fight. It is a Father's voice. It speaketh unto us as unto children. With a kindness and wisdom altogether paternal, it warns the youth of the danger that assails him, and suggests the method of defence.

I. The danger is, "if sinners entice thee." There are enticers and enticements, the fowler and his snare. (1) The enticers of youth may be divided into two great classes: the internal and the external. The sinners that entice from within are the man's own thoughts and desires; the sinners that entice from without are fellow-men who, having gone astray themselves, are busy leading others after them. (2) Among the enticements we may name: (*a*) the theatre; (*b*) the customs of society encouraging the use of intoxicating drinks.

II. The defence prescribed is, "Consent thou not." It is a blunt, peremptory command. Your method of defence must be different from the adversary's mode of attack. His strength lies in making gradual approaches, yours in a resistance sudden, resolute, total. The means of resisting (we do not speak here

of the first and best means: the word of God and prayer) are: (1) refinement of manners; (2) profitable study; (3) benevolent effort; (4) improving company.

W. ARNOT, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 34.

REFERENCES: i. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 151, and vol. iii., p. 337; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 96. i. 10-19.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 23; T. G. Horton, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 141. i. 17.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 62. i. 19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 57.

Chap. i., vers. 20-22.—"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets," etc.

THE wisdom of God is a manifold wisdom. While it centres bodily in Christ, and thence issues as from its source, it is reflected and re-echoed from every object and every event. Every law of nature and every event in history has a tongue by which wisdom proclaims God's holiness and rebukes man's sin. Three classes of persons seem to be singled out here, and to each is administered an appropriate reproof:—

I. The simple, who love simplicity. Probably we should not be far from the truth if we should accept this term in the Proverbs as intended to indicate that class of sinners whose leading characteristic is the absence of good rather than positive activity in evil.

II. The scorners, who love scorning. This class meet the threatening realities of eternity not by an easy indifference, but by a hardy resistance. They have a bold word ever ready to ward solemn thoughts away: a sneer at the silliness of a saint, an oath to manifest courage, or a witty allusion to Scripture which will make the circle ring again with laughter. Scorners love scorning. The habit grows by indulgence. It becomes a second nature.

III. The fools, who hate knowledge. Fools are those who have reached the very highest degrees of evil. Here it is intimated that they hate knowledge; and knowledge has its beginning in the fear of God. "How long shall fools hate knowledge?" Unless they learn to love it soon, they will hate it for ever.

W. ARNOT, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 64.

REFERENCES: i. 20-23.—R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 9. i. 20-33.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 291; R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 38.

Chap. i., ver. 23.—"Turn you at My reproof: behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you."

I. Observe carefully what it is which God here requires from the scornful and the simple. He prescribes none of those lofty performances which in other parts of Scripture are distinctly affirmed to lie far beyond men's power; it only asks that they would "turn at God's reproof;" and it manifestly assumes that they might turn if they would. God's call upon you is nicely adapted to the energies you actually possess. It is not a call to change your heart, and root out from the soul the ingrained love of evil; but it is a call that you reform your practice, and purge your life of its grosser evils. This you can do. We infer from this passage that every man who has a wish to repent has an instant task in which he is bound to engage: the task of ceasing to do evil and striving to do well; and therefore we set him to the task.

II. Consider the promise which God makes in the text, which evidently applies to those only who "turn at His reproof." Who can turn at God's reproof without the help of God's Spirit? And yet, according to our text, our turning is the condition of our obtaining the Spirit, so that our gaining what we need seems to take for granted that we have it already. There is undoubtedly something here that looks like contradiction, and the whole business of practical religion is involved in the removal of the difficulty. The unconverted man will tell us that, since he has not the Spirit, it is useless for him to make any effort to pray, or even to attempt a reformation of his practice. In all such objections there is a strange forgetfulness that the men whom the Bible addresses are already under the dispensation of the Spirit, not in the state of unredeemed creatures, but members for the most part of the visible Church. We cannot treat any such as beings in whom there are no actings of the Spirit of God. You may make an excuse of your helplessness; you may make an excuse of God's election; you may plead that the act of prayer presupposes that for which you are to pray, and the act of labour that for which you are to toil: but there is sufficient reason why the promises of the text have not been made part of your experience if you have failed to do that which, through the strength already communicated, you might have done: failed to obey the oft-repeated exhortation of the Lord, "Turn you at My reproof."

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1539.

Reference · i. 23.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 72.

Chap. i., vers. 24-28.

THE words of the text are awful, but not hopeless; they pronounce God's judgment on the finally impenitent; the penitent they but awaken, that they may "hear the voice of the Son of God and live."

I. The sentence pronounced is final. God is indeed long-suffering; He warns, calls, recalls, manifoldly, in various places; publicly, aloud, so that they must hear: but if, hearing, they will not hearken, a time will come when not only will He not hear those who would not hear Him, but all these calls will but increase their anguish and misery. Such is the fullest and most terrible meaning of the words; and in this they relate to the time when God will no longer pity nor spare, but the ungodly, who would not turn at His rebuke, shall perish by it.

II. But because, in their fullest sense, these words relate to the day of days, the day of judgment, is there then no sense in which they are fulfilled in this life, or are the fears which they awaken in the sinner's heart misplaced fears? By no means. Fear they should awaken, only not despair. Besides the great images of the day of judgment, when fire, or floods, or hurricanes, or earthquakes, or volcanoes, or man at once swallow up a whole people or city in one wide desolation, and end their trial here by sudden destruction, there are in the lives or deaths of individuals other events which so far partake of the same character, that they are final. All suffering, mental or bodily, has a twofold character: it is at once punishment and chastisement; it at once expresses God's hatred for the sin and mercy to the sinner; it is at once the wrath and love of Almighty God. And of these judgments many are for this life without remedy. God warns that He may not strike; but when He does strike, a man's whole life is changed. Whether for correction or for punishment, the restoration of penitents or the ripening of saints, we do see varied forms of sudden affliction, agonising, irremediable, darkening life at once, making the sufferer, if in this life only we had hope in Christ, of all men most miserable.

III. If God's fire do fall, then man's only wisdom is with what strength he has, darkened though his path be by the bewildering of past sin, to grope his way onward in the new path wherein God hath set him. The past is, in one sense, closed. It stands fixed as adamant, yet to him, as paradise to Adam, inaccessible. Yet, through God's overflowing mercy, there remains trial still. God answereth not in temporal mercies, that He may answer in

eternal loving-kindness. He lets us eat of the fruit of our own way, that by its bitterness we may learn to leave our own way and choose His. There is trial yet; and where there is trial, there is God's strength ready to aid, and a Saviour looking on to uphold and to crown in heaven, where we see only that we deserved hell.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons from Advent to Whitsuntide*, vol. i., p. 171.

Chap. i., vers. 24-28.—"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded," etc.

I. GOD in mercy visits a rebellious generation. He calls, stretches out His hands, gives counsel, and administers reproof.

II. A rebellious generation neglect or resist the gracious visitation of God.

III. They shall eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices. As certainly as a husbandman in harvest reaps only what he sowed in spring, shall they, who in life sow sin, reap wrath in judgment.

W. ARNOT, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 78.

Chap. i., vers. 24-31.—"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded," etc.

I. THE person represented as speaking these very solemn and terrible words is that same wisdom which is represented in the verses before the text as making most gracious offers to all who will hear her voice. We shall make a right use of the language if we conclude from it that the wisdom of God will not speak for ever in the way of warning and rebuke, but that a time will come to those who do not listen to her words, when her voice will bring no comfort to their hearts, and contrariwise will fill them with anguish.

II. To us Christians wisdom is presented in a very distinct and personal form, namely, as embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the excellence of the promises of wisdom could not be understood until interpreted by the coming of Christ, so the curses pronounced by wisdom had nothing of their full weight, until they fell upon those who have seen "Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified amongst them," and who, nevertheless, have counted His blood as worthless, and so have done despite to the Spirit of Grace. The love of Christ only measures the wrath

of God against those who neglect it: as the blood of Christ saved, so also the blood of Christ condemns.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 120.

REFERENCE: i. 27, 28.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 341.

Chap. i., ver. 28.—"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

CHRIST'S Gospel gives out the forgiveness of sins; and as this is its very essence, so also in what we read connected with Christ's Gospel, the tone of encouragement, of mercy, of loving-kindness to sinners is ever predominant. But there is yet another language, which is to be found alike in the Old Testament and in the New, a language not indeed so common as the language of mercy, but yet repeated many times; a language which we also need as fully as it was ever needed, and of whose severity we can no more spare one tittle than we can spare anything of the comfort of the other. The language to which I allude is expressed amongst other passages by the words of the text.

I. We should, I suppose, allow that these words were at no time in any man's earthly life so true as they will be at the day of judgment. Carry this principle a little farther, and we come to our own case. The words of the text will be more true at the day of judgment than they ever are on earth, and yet on earth they are often true substantially and practically. And even so, they may be more true to each of us a few years hence than they are at this moment; and yet, in a certain degree, they may be true at this moment—true, not absolutely and entirely, but partially; so true as to give a most solemn earnest, if we are not warned in time, of their more entire truth hereafter—first in this earthly life, then, most perfectly of all, when we shall arise at the last day.

II. Unanswered prayers, broken resolutions, are they not actually a calling on God without His hearing us; a seeking Him without finding Him? We know what it is that hinders God from hearing us always: because we are not thoroughly one in His Son Christ Jesus. Of all of us, those who the least like to pray, who have prayed with the least benefit, have the most need to pray again. If they have sought God, without finding Him, let them take heed that this be not their case for ever.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 85.

Chap. i., ver. 33.—"Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

I. The fear of evil is the element of it, with which man has most directly to do.

II. It is precisely this fear of evil which, by God's help, we are to conquer; the evil itself is wholly beyond our power. "Man is born to trouble."

III. How is the power to be won? (1) By realising how purely independent of things is man's peace and happiness. (2) By taking a true measure of the range of our being and its resources. (3) By perfect filial trust in God.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 304.

Reference: i. 33.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 188.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-5.—"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; . . . then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

This is only one passage out of many in which wisdom is connected with religion, in which it is asserted that a religious fear of God is the first step in true wisdom, and that he who would know God aright must love wisdom, and humbly and vigorously seek after her.

I. Even taking the lowest view of things, that is only a selfish view, looking only to what is to be gained, making it only a matter of profit and loss, the religious man is the wise man. For it has been often argued, that even though a man who gives his mind to religion be wrong, yet he loses nothing in the end; he has had his own happiness here, and has trodden the weary vale of life buoyed up by the expectation of a glorious resurrection morning. But if we think of another life, which is the happier then? If the religious man be right, what becomes of the irreligious?

II. Religion is wisdom and ungodliness folly, because the religious man is concerned with far grander and more exalted things than any other man. The principal attribute of a wise discerning man is to be able to see things as they really are, to pierce through outside appearances, and get at the heart of things, and not be cheated by sham outsides; and, therefore, when a man is deceived by the show of the world, and believes its promises, and lays up his treasure here, and thinks his

treasure real and safe, I think that the man is in reality weak in judgment and childish in his way of viewing things. I can see no wisdom in him, but quite the reverse.

III. Wisdom is spoken of as a thing that must be laboured for; it is not to be sought merely for amusement, but the search is to be the very business of man's life; there is no point more clearly laid down, none more insisted on, than the necessity of exertion in the pursuit of wisdom. There are lessons enough in the Book of God for every day of the longest life, and he who puts off learning them will find that they will press heavily upon him when he has the least power to learn. The wisdom we are to seek is the result of many actions; almost every act tells one way or another, tends either to wisdom or folly.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 239.

REFERENCES: ii. 1-9.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 52. ii. 1-15.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 65.

Chap. ii., vers. 2-5.—If "thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after wisdom and liftest up thy voice for understanding; . . . then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

I. SOLOMON'S meaning is, that we are to begin life by fearing God, without understanding it; as a child obeys his parents without understanding the meaning of their commands. If we do not always know the reason at first, we shall know it in due time, and get, so Solomon says, to *understand* the fear of the Lord. In due time we shall see from experience that we are in the path of life.

II. This is the secret of life—to believe that God is your Father, schooling and training you from your cradle to your grave; and then to please Him and obey Him in all things, lifting up daily your hands and thankful heart, entreating Him to purge the eyes of your soul, and give you the true wisdom, which is to see all things as they really are, and as God Himself sees them. If you do that, you may believe that God will teach you more and more how to do, in all the affairs of life, that which is right in His sight, and, therefore, good for you. He will reward you by making you more and more partakers of His Holy Spirit and of truth, by which, seeing everything as it really is, you will at last—if not in this life, still in the life to come—grow to see God Himself, who has made all things according to His own eternal mind, that they may be a pattern of His unspeakable

glory; and beyond that, who needs to see? For to know God and to see God is eternal life itself.

C. KINGSLEY, *The Good News of God*, p. 204

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 224. ii. 4, 5.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 88.

Chap. ii., ver. 6.—"For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

RELIGION may be properly considered in relation to the ends of study, and to the spirit in which these ends are to be pursued.

I. Education ought to discipline and to strengthen the powers of the mind. This is the real object of all study. Men are to be prepared for their work. The best student is the man who is most, not the man who has learned most. No good student will neglect any side of his being. He must have fulness of nature, wideness of capacity; all that God has given him must receive its due regard.

II. It is here that the subject of religion comes to be considered by the student. The nature which he possesses is distinctly religious—that is to say, he has capacities and powers which have relation to the Supreme Being, and which require training and discipline equally with all the others. Man is naturally formed for God, and if a man does not attend to that faculty whereby he regards God and can apprehend Him, he neglects that part of himself which is most important and most influential.

III. Consider the influences which religion exerts upon the student. (1) It renders him reverent. Nothing is so unsuitable to the man who desires a cultivated mind as arrogance and self-esteem. All wisdom is humble. Religion and its duties produce reverence. The religious man recognises the constant presence of God. The world to him becomes a temple, and every duty is a sacrifice. All objects of study with such a man ascend towards God, and shine in the light of the Divine throne. (2) Another element of the studious nature is the harmony which subsists between the different powers of the soul. Man cannot gain intellectual vigour when his whole being is torn asunder by conflicting forces. Outward physical quietness is the usually necessary condition of study. Inward spiritual peace is as needful. Religion will give this. Nothing in our nature so tends to preserve the balance and equipoise of the whole. And how is this religious life sustained, except by the

knowledge of Him who is the express image of the Father, and the shining ray of the central light of God? To the student especially does Christ appeal. His religion is the religion of intelligence. He is the *Word.* We are to *know* Him, and through Him to know God.

L. D. BEVAN, *Sermons to Students*, p. 9 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 337).

REFERENCES: ii. 10, 11.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 156. ii. 12-19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 97.

Chap. ii., vers. 10, 11.—"When wisdom entereth unto thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."

I. IF we look at the teaching of Scripture upon the subject of Christian humility, we find that its two main characteristics are: (1) distrust of self and of purely human wisdom; (2) trust in, and gratitude to, God as the Giver of all good gifts. From these qualities, when carried into practice, spring modesty and forbearance, and consideration in our dealings with each other; a devotion to, and worship of, Him to whom we acknowledge that all we have is due. Christian humility then, in its widest acceptation, is the attribute alike of a good citizen and a good Christian. It summarises, so to speak, and gathers into one focus that duty to man and duty to God which our Lord Himself, the pattern standard of humility, declared to be the sum total of Christian practice. It is the crowning grace of every relation of human life: in young and old, in teacher and in learner, in master and in servant, in parent and in child, at the councils of statesmen, in busy scenes of merchandise and industry, or at little children's play.

II. We do not, of course, suppose that humility, unlike any other virtue, has not its limits. Obedience may be slavish and unreasoning; self-effacement may cover a shrinking from responsibility; self-sacrifice may even be quixotic and useless. Childlike humility is indeed a crown of human character, a necessary ingredient in human perfection; but it may not stand in the way of Christian zeal for high and noble objects; it may not bar the path of Christian duty by encouraging weakness and irresolution. Shrink not from self-assertion in the cause of good when once you have ascertained that it is the cause of good, and not the cause of self; let not humility stay your hand from the plough when there is hard, rough soil of evil lives and evil habits to be broken up, misery to be relieved, degradation to be

raised, and the very germs of civilisation to be implanted; in that great field of labour, whether in heathen lands afar, or amid scarcely less heathen scenes at home, where the labourers are so few and the work so great, and where so much has to be done to prepare the soil before there can be even a distant hope of harvest.

T. L. PAPILLON, *Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduates' Journal*, Feb. 28th, 1884.

REFERENCE: ii. 10-22.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 64.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—"Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God."

I. THERE is a season when youth becomes independent and intolerant of control, when gentle guidance is mistaken for love of interference and of power, when the youth and the maiden think scorn to follow the ways and maxims of the parent, the friend, the teacher, and take pride in forming a code and gathering maxims of their own; in speaking their own words and walking after the light of their own eyes. These are critical days in every man's life—days which determine whether he is to be a pilgrim to the light, or to drop down into the darkness—days when he is made or marred for ever. On which side am I? Which have I chosen for my lot? Is the guide of my youth still my guide?—that soft voice still my monitor? Is my father's God my God for ever and ever, and have I taken Him for my guide unto death?

II. Notice the reason of this woful departure and falling away: "She forgetteth the covenant of her God." The solemn fact that God's vows are upon her is suffered to pass from her into forgetfulness. She saith in her heart, "There is no God."

And if she, one of ancient Israel was bound to God, by a covenant, what shall we say in this matter? The covenant of our God began in our earliest days. Baptism and confirmation were to us seals of the covenant, most solemn and important. You bound yourselves to forsake God's enemies; you bound yourselves to cleave to Him and serve Him. (1) We are bound by that covenant to stand aloof from Satan. How are we situated with regard to the great enemy of our souls? He is ever busy around us; knowing our weak points, urging our evil tempers, suggesting, prompting, decoying us into sin. Are we his enemies, or are we in league with him? (2) We are to stand aloof from the world. Those who are bound by God's covenant should not run to the excess prevalent in the ungodly world, in adornment of person

in frivolity of amusement, in countenancing any of those employments or meetings where merely self-display is the object; that the person, and the household, and the furniture, and the equipage of the Christian should be modest, unobtrusive, showing the conscientious stewardship of one who has a neighbour to benefit and edify, and a God to glorify, and not the lavish expenditure of one who lives for himself, or for his family, or for the world.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 16.

REFERENCES: iii. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 269; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 106. iii. 1-4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 83. iii. 1-10.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 75.

Chap. iii., vers. 5, 6 (with Prov. xxvii., ver. 1).—**"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."**

I. THE precept, "Lean not unto thine own understanding" is one in which, with advancing years, we are well disposed to acquiesce. One who has grown older, and who has really profited by the experience of life, must often have found cause to revise his own judgments. In this world of change and sorrow experience soon teaches us the lesson, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Sudden reverses overtake the most prosperous; the most sagacious make blunders, through which their inferiors discover with pleased surprise that these wise men were, after all, not so much wiser than themselves.

II. The result of such experience might seem to be general distrust of the powers of the human intellect, but happily the exigencies of life save us from the danger of any unreasonable scepticism. We must act, and it is continually necessary for us to decide between different courses of action. As experience convinces us of the weakness of our understanding, our liability to go wrong notwithstanding all the light it gives us, we should all be glad if there could be supplied us any way of arriving at our belief which we might safely trust without the necessity of leaning on our own understanding. It is thus that the claim of the Roman Catholic Church to infallibility has been willingly admitted by multitudes.

III. When we want to know what is meant by wisdom and understanding in the Book of Proverbs we can find no better commentary than the saying in the Book of Job: "The fear of

the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." This, then, is what the writer of this part of the Book of Proverbs means to say in the words of the text. Be not deceived by any suggestions of the human heart which would lead you to fancy that God's precepts are not wise, and that you can find happiness in any ways which are not the ways of holiness. The words of the text convey no injunction to us to put out the candle of the Lord within us, that reason which supplies the light whereby we must walk; but only an injunction to us to hold fast the best conclusion which true wisdom furnishes—namely, the conviction that it must be a vain search to look for happiness in any way but this.

IV. The truth that we know not what a day may bring forth seems to give a most disheartening view of human life. We have the burden cast on us of directing our own way while yet the light by which to guide it is denied us. This is the truth which removes all sadness from the reflection that we know not what shall be on the morrow, that while a man's heart deviseth his way, it is the Lord who directeth his steps. Though the path which we tread may be dark and gloomy, we can walk it with courage if we feel that we have our Father and our Saviour with us. The Psalmist found it so long since when he said, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

G. SALMON, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 153.

REFERENCES: iii. 5.—R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 142; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 102; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 116. iii. 5, 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 33.

Chap. iii., ver. 6.—"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

A CHARACTERISTIC of the Old Testament Scriptures, which results from the genius of the Hebrew language, is specially observable in the Book of Proverbs. Instead of the copious, versatile, precise, and in so many respects unrivalled, instrument which the Greek wields when expressing his thought, the Hebrew writer has at command a language possessing by comparison only a few and simple words. But of these, many are words of the widest range and applicability. They are words containing depth below depth of meaning. The text furnishes us with a sample of this almost untranslatable pregnancy and power of Hebrew speech. The English word "acknowledge" represents only one of the many meanings which are to be found, upon

reflection, in the original word יָדַע. This word, originally identical with εἰδεῖν and *videre*, came to signify that which results from sight, unless the sense be imperfect or the understanding impaired, namely, knowledge. It exhibits knowledge at all its stages of growth. As used in the passage before us it describes nothing less comprehensive than the whole action of man's spiritual being when face to face with the eternal God. It is irresistibly implied that to know God truly, to have a full sight of God before the soul, is something more than mere head-knowledge, that it is knowledge in act. It is, in short, to be out of heart with self, to distrust self, to abase and crush and forget self; we are sensible of the presence of a Being who discovers to self its insignificance or its pollution. The text thus includes, besides much else, such specific exhortations as that of St. Peter, "Be clothed with humility."

I. Not long since the question was discussed, whether a virtue can ever die. Certainly particular relative excellences do characterise particular races, epochs, stages of social progress. They appear; they shine forth; they wane and fall back into obscurity; they vanish outright. Doubtless there are forms of virtuous action suited to human life at one stage of its development which do not fully express or answer to its wants and aspirations at another. But the question does not concern the mere modification of the outward expression of a virtue; if practical applications may vary imperishable principles must live. The opinion which views intellectual submission as a dead virtue, could hardly ascribe any strong vitality to the grace of humility. If humility *is* dying out, this is because the idea of God has been impoverished or impaired in the thought of our day. Humility is but the sincere acknowledgment in thought, in language, in action, of the first and most commanding of all facts; it is the sincere acknowledgment of God.

II. Theoretically speaking, humility must of course be right. But look, you say, to its practical effect. Does it interfere more or less with activity and success in life? Is it secretly hostile to the claims and efforts of vigorous and cultivated intellect? After all, what is humility? Humility is not a μικροψυχία. On the contrary, the Christian is the genuine μεγαλόψῦχος; he is pre-eminently the man of large soul and noble instincts. Humility is not a want of enterprise, a subtle resource of idleness. The force which is apparently forfeited by the destruction of self-reliance in the character is more than recovered when the soul rests in perfect trustfulness on the strong arm of

God. The Christian's humility is in reality the cause of his mental energy.

III. Humility is indispensable to the true life of the soul. No man ever went to heaven without learning humility on this side of the grave. (1) Without humility—that is to say, the victory of truth in the soul—no soul ever really turned to God. (2) Without humility religious progress is impossible. (3) Without humility no soul that was turned to God, and is learning to serve Him, is for a moment safe.

H. P. LIDDON, *University Sermons*, 1st series, p. 139.

I. You can acknowledge God in your play, by recognising that it is He who gives it, by thanking Him for it, and by remembering that He is near you when you are at it. It would not make you less happy to remember this, but far more happy. Only, it would repress many a wicked word, many an angry thought, many an ungentle and ungenerous deed. If all children remembered it a new sunshine would fall on the pavement, and a new joy ring in the voices there.

II. Do you acknowledge God in your work? He expects you to do so. How is He to be acknowledged? (1) By recognising that He has given you your work to do, and expects you to do it well; (2) by praying about your lessons, asking God to assist you to overcome your defects.

III. Boys and girls always have companions. Friendship will be one of the largest as well as sweetest parts of your life. There can be none in which it is more important to acknowledge God, that He may direct your paths.

IV. Thoughts of the future. Without God, however brave and strong you be, you will stumble and fall. Is Christ your Saviour and your Friend? He comes to you now, and at the outset of your career offers to accompany you. Will you not welcome Him and clasp Him to your heart with bands of triple steel? "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

J. STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 118.

REFERENCES: iii. 6.—J. M. Charlton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 324; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 5.

Chap. iii., vers. 7, 8.—"Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord and depart from evil," etc.

I. THE text may be paraphrased and expanded thus: God has taught you by various ways—by your own experience and that of others; above all, by the warnings of conscience and the

voice of revelation—what is right and what is wrong. Do not set yourself above this teaching, or think to be wiser than your Maker. Presume neither to cavil at nor neglect those unchanging laws by which the Almighty has separated good from evil, and appointed to each their just recompense of reward. Fear the Lord, for that is the beginning of true wisdom, and not this fancied enlightenment on which you pride yourself,—fear the Lord and depart from evil.

II. Notice some familiar instances of the temptation which we incur to be wise in our own eyes, and of the evil into which we fall if we yield to it. (1) On many things the stamp of good or evil is so indelibly planted that no sane man can presume to question it. Who could think murder praiseworthy, or prayer a vice? But there are other things on which the mark, though visible to a faithful scrutiny, is not so patent; or, to vary the figure, between the acknowledged territories of the two principles is a borderland which needs wary walking, lest we pass over before we know it to the enemy. The humble man will avoid that doubtful district if he can; if compelled to enter it, he will walk circumspectly, trusting very little to his own discernment, and greatly anxious to be guided in the right path. Not so he that is wise in his own eyes. This borderland is his favourite resort. (2) It is a common delusion that we can become good and religious when we will. There is a law which is written in the history of a thousand misguided lives, that when habits of sin are once formed they are not lightly broken through; and that, instead of its being an easy thing to turn from the world to God, every added year, aye week, of rebellion, makes it more difficult, till at last, long before we are called to our account, it becomes with some men, humanly speaking, impossible. (3) The devil has his proverbs as well as Solomon, and among the devil's proverbs there is none perhaps more common or more wicked than this, that—"young men must sow their wild oats." Facts are clean against this vile assertion, for four-fifths of the men who have been pure and holy in later years have been holy and pure in their youth; and the law that "evil communications" are not a preliminary of sanctity, but "corrupt good manners," is a law of the moral world which this proverb wilfully ignores.

E. H. Bradby, *Sermons at Haileybury*, p. 232.

References: iii. 7, 8.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 121. iii. 9.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 98; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 123.

Chap. iii., ver. 11.—"My son, be not weary of His correction."

I. Affliction acts as a dyke against the overflow of evil; it incessantly restrains and thrusts it back. Sin finds its limit in suffering; passion strikes against pain as a fatal bourne, where it perishes; lust is quenched in disgust; and death is there to say to the raging waves of our dissolute passions, "Thus far shall ye go and no farther." Thus far; namely, to that gravestone against which evil always dashes itself at last.

II. Suffering is not a blessing simply because it acts as a restraint; but also, and especially, because it acts as a preparative. It is a bridle, but also a spur, urging us towards the Cross. (1) An infinite suffering, an unlimited obedience,—such was the Cross. At this cost heaven and earth were reconciled, and salvation was consummated. But it was in our name that the great work of that hour of atonement was performed, and we can derive benefit from it only as we ratify it. He only will be saved who unites himself to Christ, not with a view of offering again a sacrifice which was perfected in itself, but in order to make it his own by an earnest acceptance and a living faith. Grace employs every means to bring us to this, and of all conceivable means none can be more efficacious than suffering. Hence the important part which it plays in the work of our personal redemption. (2) Thus suffering, under the influence of grace, fills up the infinite distance between man and the Cross. Through the direct action of grace, suffering had prepared the way for Christ in the old world, by attacking not merely the individual but also the lost race of men, whom it had mercilessly and unceasingly pursued from religion to religion, from illusion to illusion; and it was through a wasted world, reduced to the condition of a desert, that the road was made which was to lead to Him. Ever since the Redeemer came among men, and called to them from His Cross, suffering has been His great prophet and forerunner; but suffering modified, mingled with blessing, as befits a pardoned world, but yet traversing the earth with the axe of John the Baptist. We must recognise even in its most distressing manifestations the infinite love which seeks to save our souls at all costs.

E. de Pressensé, *The Mystery of Suffering*, p. 34.

References: iii. 11, 12.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 86; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 126; R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 88.

Chap. iii., ver. 12 (with 1 Cor. xv., ver. 55).—"Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth."

In the case of a saint, his afflictions and death fall to be

considered: (1) as they have a respect to himself, and (2) as they have a respect to his neighbours and friends.

I. As they have a respect to himself. (1) The design of a saint's afflictions may be to rebuke him for backsliding, and not seldom for spiritual sloth and dulness of heart, with a view of recalling him from his wanderings, or arousing him from his lethargy. (2) A saint may be making commendable progress and yet be visited with affliction, that his graces may be advanced to a higher degree of excellence—the Lord designing for His servant a station of peculiar glory in His heavenly kingdom. (3) Affliction and death are frequently commissioned as preventives of evil. (4) That which often strikes us as mysterious is, perhaps, resolvable on the principle that God removes some of His saints when their graces are most vigorous, and shine with the brightest lustre, before they decline; so that His government may be justified in advancing them to a higher place of honour in the kingdom, than it would have been fit to assign them, had they entered eternity in a state of declension.

II. It is frequently the interests of his friends even more than the interests of the saint himself, which the Lord designs to advance by the particular time and manner of his death. He may be a spiritually prosperous saint, cultivating his talents and opportunities with assiduity and zeal; but they may need correction and quickening, preservation from evil; and the requisite and most suitable discipline is dispensed to them by means of his afflictions.

III. Practical reflections. (1) Let us be thankful for death. (2) In reference to afflictions which do not proceed the length of death, as we would be saved their infliction, let us submit to the more gentle discipline of the remonstrances of the Spirit of God, excited within our consciences. (3) As we fear the death of our friends, let us be careful of our own ways. (4) As we desire that our own lives be prosperous and prolonged, let us be earnest and faithful in the training of our children, and in the admonition of our friends. (5) Let us diligently prepare for the death of our friends. (6) Let us prepare ourselves for our own death. (7) Let us examine ourselves of the improvement which we have made or are making of the death of our friends, and prepare to give them a satisfactory account of it.

W. ANDERSON, *Discourses*, 2nd series, p. 40.

REFERENCES: iii. 13.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 134. iii. 13-20.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 101. iii. 14, 15.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, p. 136. iii. 16.—*Ibid.*, p. 139

Chap. iii., ver. 17 (with John xvi., ver. 33).—"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

I. RELIGION, regarded as a theory of a perfect state, is right in pronouncing itself a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. If a man could but walk perfectly in the way of religion he would be perfectly happy. But man is not born into an ideal state, into a perfect state even; on the contrary, he is born further from his nature than any other creature on earth. God did not make men perfect. He made them pilgrims after perfection.

II. Men are born with all the faculties of reason, but not with knowledge. That they are to find. Men are born with social natures, but not with social loves and refinements of experience. These they are to work out. Men are born with moral sense, but not with knowledge of its fruits, its inspirations, its various experiences. It is the business of their life to find out these things. To teach all this vast lore of experience God has established five schools: (1) the school of the family; (2) the school of the material world; (3) the school of civil society; (4) the school of business; (5) the school of the Church.

III. It is in the light of such a development that we can see the relation between joy and sorrow in the Christian scheme. Sorrow is that conflict which every person experiences as he is endeavouring to learn. It is the incident of growth from a lower to a higher state. Suffering is God's regent of the universe, saying, "The way is a way of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace:" and therefore when you suffer it is because you are out of the way.

If this be so, I remark: (1) The search for the origin of evil is a mistaken search in the direction in which men are looking for it. Evil is nothing in the world but a part of the Divine system by which we are to be unfolded. (2) We see the true and proper meaning of self-denial. It is a higher faculty, making a lower one keep down and know its place. (3) We see the foreshadowings of the Cross in human life. (4) We see love suffering in life. (5) There is but one way out of suffering, and that way is upward. All other ways are adjourning it, or preparing for its recurrence in even greater measure.

H. W. BEECHER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 271.

Chap. iii., ver. 17.—"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

THERE is a certain exclusiveness about this expression which stands out into a necessary emphasis; strong in the first, stronger in the second, clause of the sentence. For of many things it may be said, that some of their "ways" are "pleasant," though some be bitter; and of a very few things indeed, perhaps, it might be said that their "paths" are sometimes "peace." But of nothing in the whole world save one—the life of a real child of God—could it ever be spoken so broadly, so universally, so absolutely.

I. In this high peace, then, notice that there is a distinction drawn which is not without its special signification. It is the ways which are pleasant, and the paths which are peace. Now the way is always larger and broader than the path. And the meaning may be this: The more general and public things in religion—things which all see and know—these are pleasant; but the things which retire back and are most unfrequented, and which very few either see or guess, all these are "peace."

II. Wisdom's way is: (1) a high way. It is always reaching up out of littlenesses; it ranges at loftier levels, it has the world at its feet. (2) Wisdom's way always has one fixed mark. For that it steers. It throws lesser things aside as it goes, and it goes straight and earnest to a goal, and that goal is the glory of God. (3) Wisdom's way is a way of usefulness. It always puts usefulness first—before pleasure, before profit. (4) To go in wisdom's way is to go in sweet fellowship. They who walk there walk hand in hand. It is full of sympathies, it is a road which lies in the communion of all saints, and all love all in wisdom's way. (5) Above all, Christ is there. They walk with Jesus, they lean on Jesus, they are satisfied with Jesus, and they shall travel on and reign with Jesus, in that city where they go.

III. Let us leave the wider track, and go down to one or two of the more secluded "paths." (1) There is a going out in a man's heart from its deepest places to Christ. He tells Jesus something which has long been a hidden burden in his mind. And in the little path of that secret confession there is a peace which no words can tell. (2) It is a very small path that faith takes, but the "peace passeth understanding." (3) Shame, sorrow, parting, death, lie in the same wisdom's path. Jesus' path lay just the same, through shame, through death. And

wisdom's path and Jesus' path are both one; and both are peace. J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1867, p. 77.

REFERENCES: iii. 17.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 278; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 142. iii. 19, 20. —*Ibid.*, p. 144. iii. 21-35.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 113. iii. 26.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, p. 147. iii. 27, 28.—*Ibid.*, p. 152.

Chap. iii., ver. 32.—"His secret is with the righteous."

I. CONSIDER the intimacy between God and man implied in this promise. To whom is it that we open our confidence, and explain our most secret purposes and objects? It is not to the stranger, of whom perhaps we know nothing but his mere name and title; not to those who have already slighted and injured us; not to the passing acquaintance, between whom and ourselves there is no bond closer than that of a formal courtesy; but to those we love and who love us; those with whom we have had long and familiar acquaintance, and in whom, through constant intercourse, we have learned to place confidence. Thus it is in regard to God and the soul. He gives milk for babes; broad simple truths, conveyed in His Holy Word, as clearly as human language can express them; and when these are received, then He leads the believer on to a further and higher knowledge. Thus there arises a personal, familiar intercourse, a spiritual intimacy, an individual knowledge of experience between the soul and God. Not little is the dignity, nor poor the communion, nor scant the privilege, contained in this promise, "His secret is with the righteous."

II. Look at the nature and blessedness of the secret revealed. (2) It includes a clear knowledge of God's being and of the revelation of His will. (2) The secret of God includes the full saving comprehension of the Gospel of His dear Son. (3) Another secret of God is the sweetness of His comforting peace. E. GARBETT, *The Soul's Life*, p. 16.

REFERENCES: iii. 33.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 158. iii. 33-35.—E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 40. iii. 34.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 10. iii.—Parker, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., pp. 421, 481. iv. 1-13.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 126. iv. 2.—*New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 142. iv. 3, 4.—E. H. Bradby, *Sermons at Haileybury*, p. 150.

Chap. iv., ver. 5.—"Get wisdom."

I. SOLOMON himself received wisdom from Divine inspiration. Now no supernatural supply of wisdom can be vouchsafed to

us. There is no limit to the moral improvement which God's Spirit may work in our hearts; there is no saying how much kinder, gentler, purer, truer, humbler, better, He may make us. But it is a fact of most assured experience, that not even the Holy Ghost gives to many of the very best of our race the worldly tact, and shrewdness, and long-headedness, which many of the very worst inherited by their birth. It is not that wisdom which Solomon bids us get, but something far different; something far better—longer lasting, and yet within the reach of all.

II. There is worldly wisdom, and there is heavenly wisdom. The first not everyone can have in any shining measure, and it is vain to bid anyone get it. The second all may have. It is choosing things above, because they are best and most enduring. It is ranging one's self in the great battle on God's side, which you do every time you resolutely do right and refuse to do wrong. This better wisdom is of the heart rather than of the head. It lies rather in the moral choice of good and right, than in the mere intellectual discernment of it, however clear. It is seeing with the head what is good, yea, what is best; and then with all the heart choosing that and cleaving to it.

III. This wisdom is a possession which may be "got," as Solomon calls it; got, though we had it not to start with, as mere head wisdom could never be; and is a possession which may be cultivated in a sense in which mere intellectual gifts could never be cultivated. The third Person in the Godhead, the Blessed and Holy Spirit, in sober earnest will help you if you try.

A. K. H. B., *Towards the Sunset*, p. 45.

Chap. iv., ver. 7.—"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

I. THERE must be reality in our knowledge. It must be the real knowledge of real things. We must be sure that we, in the first instance, take it in as accurately as possible. We must not bridge over to ourselves difficulties, whether little or great, or take a leap over them, leaving a part behind us that is not sound or solid.

II. There is no such thing as useless knowledge, and the knowledge of theory is a greater thing than the knowledge of practice; to express it otherwise, the knowledge of principles is beyond, and greater than, and more important than, the doing

of things however well without understanding them. However real may be the knowledge that you gain of any number of details, it is only by understanding principles that you can hope to make any use of details which shall advance or strengthen any single good cause.

III. The power to use knowledge must come from something outside the knowledge itself. The mind may be stored with facts, and with true theories and with many a wise observation; but after all it is only by considering, reflecting, observing, that we can turn what we have already acquired to good account for ourselves or for others. Such wisdom is "above and beyond our studies." For it is beyond all that wisdom which is from above, which the Father gives to them that ask Him.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 19.

I. THE world gives the name of wisdom to many higher and lower manifestations of intellectual foresight and practical sense, but Scripture sees in it nothing save one single law of life: "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

II. Some one may say, Is any knowledge worth the attainment, save the one knowledge which is wisdom? The answer is, To the true Christian every school will be a school of Christ. On the ample leaf of knowledge, whether it be rich with the secrets of nature or with the spoils of time, we will read no name save the name of God. To seek for knowledge where it is possible is the clear duty of man; to win it is the gift of God. Knowledge apart from wisdom is like a vestibule dissevered from its temple, but it may on the other hand be the worthy vestibule of that sacred shrine. Knowledge is a vain thing only when it is sought out of unworthy motives and applied to selfish ends; but it becomes noble and glorious when it is desired solely for man's benefit and consecrated wholly to God's praise. F. W. FARRAR, *The Silence and Voice of God*, p. 119.

REFERENCES: iv. 7.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 49; J. R. Lumby, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 222. iv. 8.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 169; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 248. iv. 10, 11.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 161.

Chap. iv., ver. 13.—"Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."

WE come into the real school-life when we have left school. Duty is twofold; duty to do, duty to endure. We have the

tasks of the school to do, and the discipline of the school to bear. And the more honest we are in the first, the braver shall we be for the second.

I. We have duties to perform. Not what you do, but how you do it, is the test. And small things, done as to the Lord and not to men, grow golden and precious with the stamp of honest stewardship. Our manhood is truly developed only as we make life real, and we only make life real in proportion as we take each duty, great or small, and make it great by principle, and sacred because we do it unto God.

II. Nor are these duties of our school-life restricted by the bounds of our activities; they enter into the region of endurance and challenge patience as well as principle; the fortitude which can bear as well as the courage that can achieve. Christianity is tested as much or more by the meekness with which the discipline is borne as by the energy with which the task is done. Not in the romance that wakes the poet's lyre, or the adventure that upstirs a nation's wonder, and the brunt that kindles man's acclaim, is true life only to be shown, and noble guerdon to be won; but in the constancy which carries principle along each quiet path of duty, doing the unnoticed deed for Christ's sake only, carrying the load to the grave's brink through weal or woe in His one name.

A. MURSELL, *Catholic Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 25.

REFERENCES: iv. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1418; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 163.

Chap. iv., vers. 14, 15.—"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

ONE chief cause of the wickedness which is everywhere seen in the world—and in which, alas! each of us has more or less his share—is our curiosity to have some fellowship with darkness, some experience of sin, to know what the pleasures of sin are like.

I. This delusion arises from Satan's craft, the father of lies, who knows well that if he can get us once to sin, he can easily make us sin twice and thrice, till at length we are taken captive at his will. He sees that curiosity is man's great and first snare, as it was in Paradise; and he knows if he can but force a way into his heart, by this chief and exciting temptation, those temptations of other kinds which follow in life will easily prevail over us; and on the other hand, that if we resist the

beginnings of sin, there is every prospect, through God's grace, that we shall continue in a religious way.

II. "Enter not into the path of the wicked," etc.: (1) Because it is hardly possible to delay our flight, without rendering flight impossible. (2) If we allow evil thoughts to be present to us, we shall make ourselves familiar with them. Our great security against sin lies in being shocked at it. (3) There is another wretched effect of sinning once, which sometimes takes place; not only the sinning that once itself, but being so seduced by it as forthwith to continue in the commission of it ever afterwards, without seeking for arguments to meet our conscience withal! from a mere brutish, headstrong, infatuate greediness after its bad pleasures. (4) It is always the tendency and the end of sinning at length to enslave us to itself.

III. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Heaven and hell are at war for us and against us, yet we trifle and let life go on at random. We treat sin, not as an enemy to be feared, abhorred, and shunned, but as a misfortune and a weakness; we do not pity and shun sinful men, but we enter into their path so far as to keep company with them, and next, being tempted to copy them, we fall almost without an effort. Be not thus deceived and overcome by an evil heart of unbelief. Make up your minds to take God for your portion, and pray to Him for grace to enable you so to do.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 208.

REFERENCES: iv. 14, 15.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. viii., p. 63. iv. 14-27.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 138.

Chap. iv., ver. 18.—"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

To understand somewhat the force of this divinely beautiful sentence, we must call to mind that our condition in this world in the sight of Almighty God is very frequently spoken of as that of travellers on their journey; and our life altogether is represented as a way—a path—a progress. The text is a kind of parable setting before us the thoughts of travellers setting out on a journey very early in the morning, when there is a faint streak of light in the eastern sky; at first quite faint, but by degrees it grows brighter and brighter, till at last the sun rises above the horizon, and the "perfect day" begins.

I. The sincere and humble penitent is comforted by being told that the path of the just is as the glimmering light of

the morning dawn; that he has no right at present to expect much light or aid; that if he can be satisfied with that imperfect, and what the world esteems "poor," instruction which the Church Apostolic has ever ventured to give to her penitent children, then by degrees we shall be led on through the strict path of discipline to higher knowledge, and shall, perhaps, enjoy that comfort which, for the present at least, he acknowledges he has no title to.

II. It is a great comfort to the sincerely penitent Christian to be told to go on in his path as having but little light, because he is thereby convinced that he must not venture to trust to himself and his own guidance.

III. It is a comfort to the sincere and reflecting Christian to remember, that at the best we are but in a kind of morning twilight; the wisest of men, whatever he may fancy, sees into the mysteries of Divine truth "but as through a glass darkly," and by reflection, as St. Paul says. To those who here walk by faith, not by sight, is offered the blessed hope and promise beyond the grave of seeing their Saviour face to face, of knowing as they are known, in that perfect day, towards which the path of the just, though here dim and difficult, yet shineth more and more.

IV. There is in this verse a very solemn caution. If our life be not one of habitual improvement, if we are contented to go on month after month, and year after year, much as we used to be, then surely it cannot be affirmed to us that our path is shining more and more towards the perfection of light and holiness; and then surely we have reason to fear that we shall not in the end attain to the resurrection of the just, shall not be numbered with God's saints in glory everlasting.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ii., p. 141.

REFERENCES: iv. 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 213; W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 286; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 1. iv. 18, 19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 166.

Chap. iv., ver. 23.—"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

I. THE meaning which a reader of the English only would affix to these words, amounts to this—that on the state of the heart depends the character of the man. The issues of life, the various ends at which a man is landed, the total of what he is in principle or feeling, the value at which Omniscience would

sum him up—this depends not on external circumstances, but on his heart. Purify, then, and elevate that heart, keep it above all keeping, as a tender plant to be nursed and guarded in an unkindly soil.

II. If we give to these words an interpretation which accords more exactly with the force of the original, they will then mean, that from the heart is the fountain or source of life in the sense of happiness. In this sense the words mean that contentment and happiness in this life depend upon the heart, not upon external circumstances. (1) Observe the difference between the man who is blessed with a cheerful and hopeful heart, and the one who has a desponding and complaining heart—not the heart-sickness only which comes of hope deferred, but the heart-jaundice which turns hope itself into despair. While the cheerful heart can find happiness even under circumstances the most depressing, the complaining heart will turn even the most encouraging into misery. (2) Look at the dependence of happiness on tenderness and kindness of heart. Is it too much to say that the man of hard and cruel heart is in the end far more cruel to himself than he can be to anyone else? In himself he tears out by the roots the plant of happiness and dries up at its very springs the "fountain of life."

III. Let the issues of life, which are said to spring from the heart, be those of eternal life, and then the words will mean, that on the state of the heart depends the salvation of the soul.

A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 193.

I. Inasmuch as "out of the heart are the issues of life" it is important to keep the reservoir full. It is bad enough to have an empty head, but an empty heart is worse still. For, other things being equal, a man's force in the world is just in proportion to the fulness of his heart.

II. Strive with all diligence to keep the heart pure. A full reservoir is not enough; the water must be clean. If the heart be not pure, you may be certain the thoughts will not be pure, nor the conversation, nor the life.

III. Keep your heart tranquil; seek to have a soul calm and peaceful and at rest. You are all but certain to meet with troubles. Most likely some of you will get sadly knocked about in the world, you will meet with reverses and disappointments, but a heart that is fixed on God can bear all these things with equanimity.

J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 213.

References; iv. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 179; *Plain*

Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ix., p. 324; E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 218; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 205; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 191; R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 132; Forsyth Hamilton, *Pulpit Parables*, p. 24.

Chap. iv., vers. 24-27.—**"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee," etc.**

First the fountain, then the streams; first the heart and then the life-course. The issues of life are manifold: three of their main channels are mapped out here—the "lips," the "eyes," and the "feet."

I. A froward mouth. The form of the precept, "put it away," reveals the secret of our birth. The evil is there at the first in every one. He who is free of it was born free. When a man would erect a temple to God within his own body the first effort of the builder is to clear the rubbish away. Of the things from the heart that need to be put away, the first, in the order of nature, is the froward mouth. Words offer the first and readiest egress for evil.

II. The next outlet from the fountain is by the eyes. The precept is quaint in its cast—"let thine eyes look right on"—and yet its meaning is not difficult. Let the heart's aim be simple and righteous. Both in appearance and in reality let your path be a straightforward one.

III. The last of these issues is by the feet. Ponder, therefore, their path. The best time to ponder any path, is not at the end, nor even at the middle, but at the beginning of it. The right place for weighing the worth of any course is on this side of its beginning. By the word of God paths and actions will be weighed in the judgment. By the word of God, therefore, let paths and actions, great or small, be pondered now.

W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 171.

Reference: iv. 24-27.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 190.

Chap. iv., ver. 25.—**"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."**

The rule of life, the comfort of life, the strength of life, the life of life, is, first to have an object, and then to live up to that object steadily and unquestioningly. A distinct, sufficient purpose, and a determined pursuit, give reality to life and make the man.

I. The primary thing, then, is to have an object in life which

will be (1) worthy of our being; (2) suited to our character; (3) attractive to our tastes. For if it fail in any one of these three things, it will not long be our goal. To fulfil these three conditions, there can only be four things in which an object can be found—victory, usefulness, eternity, Christ.

II. There are three snares which beset and entangle the feet of a man, who has resolved to live for some great end. (1) Retrospection. Do not look back. Do not look back at past attainments, for they are nothing. Do not look back at old sins, for they are gone. The Christian religion is to cut off the guilty past, and to separate a man from himself, and from his own history. (2) Introspection. Do not look in. A great many people waste a great deal of time to no profit, but rather to much discouragement, and much hindrance to their spiritual advancement, by pulling their own hearts to pieces. (3) Circumspection. Do not look around at circumstances. They are mere accidents. Looking at the waves and listening to the wind, Peter sank. A wrestler must never let his eyes drop. A racer must never look away from the winning-post, nor the ploughman from the end of the furrow, nor the helmsman from his needle's point. Thousands of things are coming and going every day at our sides. But what are they all? They roll on the surface, but they cannot touch the deeper thing below. They dart, meteor-like, but my star is fixed.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 12th series, p. 117.

REFERENCES: iv. 27.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 467. v. 1-23.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 148. v. 8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 332. v. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 667. v. 11-13.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 4th series, p. 481. v. 15.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 179. v. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii. p. 191. v. 21.—W. Arnot. *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 183. v. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 915; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 25. vi. 1-11.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 159. vi. 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 63. vi. 10, 11.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 405. vi. 11.—*Preacher's Monthly* vol. vii., p. 191. vi. 16-19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 188. vi. 20.—F. Wagstaff, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 332. vi. 20-24.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 190. vi. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1017; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 184.

Chap. vi., ver. 23 (with Psalm cxix., ver. 105).—"**The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.**"

THE Divine lamp is:—

I. A light on the path. The best path in the world would be of no use without light enough to see our way. If we cannot

have daylight, we shall be glad of moonlight; and if the night be dark and moonless, we shall want lamplight. What a glorious lamp you would have if it were possible to get a spark of the sun itself, and put that into your lantern! Even such a lamp is the Bible.

II. A light upon the past. The Bible shows us how man began his journey, created in the image of God, and happy in loving and obeying God. It shows us his first wrong step, and how one wrong act opened the door of sin and misery and death. Thus the word of God is—

III. A warning light. It is God's lighthouse, to warn us off the treacherous rocks of sin, on which we are in danger of being wrecked. It is God's beacon-light warning us to be on our guard against the assaults of temptation, and the power and craft of that great enemy of our souls, from whom we can be safe only when we put on the whole armour of God.

IV. A saving light.

V. A light for every step.

E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 149.

Chap. vi., vers. 27, 28.—"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

THESE words contain an important principle of general application to every sin—the impossibility for a man to play with the enticement to sin without falling a prey thereto. The truth of the statement will appear if we take into consideration the following things:—

I. That every temptation presented to man addresses itself to a nature that is already corrupt, and is therefore liable to take to it.

II. That man in playing with the temptation puts himself directly in the way that leads naturally to the sin.

III. That playing with the temptation to any evil shows some degree of bias in the nature to that particular evil.

IV. That playing with temptation brings man into contact with sin only on its pleasurable side, and thus gives it an advantage to make an impression favourable to itself on his mind.

V. That man, through playing with temptation, weakens his moral power to resist the sin, and gradually gets so debilitated as to be too weak to oppose it.

VI. That man, by playing with temptation, at last tempts the

Spirit of God to withdraw His protection from him, and to leave him to himself, and a prey to his lust.

O. THOMAS, *The Welsh Pulpit of To-day*, p. 68.

REFERENCES: vi. 28.—E. R. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 149. vi.—Parker, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 541.

Chap. vii., ver 6.—"At the window of my house—I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding."

FROM Solomon's observation we learn:—

I. The special perils of great cities. (1) The vastness and multitudinousness of many of our modern cities provide a secrecy which is congenial to vice. This enormously adds to the power of temptation, that you may pluck the poisonous fruit unobserved. Only keep the inward monitor quiet, and you may run undetected and unchallenged into every excess. (2) In all great towns, solicitations to vice abound as they do not elsewhere. Every passion has a tempter lying in wait for it.

II. We learn from this passage the evil of late hours. The devil, like the beast of prey, stalks forth when the sun goes down. Midnight on earth is hell's midnoon.

III. The next warning in the text is the danger of foolish company. The word "simple" means in the Book of Proverbs silly, frivolous, idle, abandoned. You could almost predict with certainty the future of one who selected such society. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

IV. No man's understanding can be called thoroughly sound till it has been brought under the power of the truth as it is in Jesus. Your only security against the perils of the city, of the dark night and of evil company, is a living faith in God, a spiritual union with Christ.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 3.

REFERENCES: viii. 4.—R. M. McCheyne, *Memoir and Remains*, p. 325. viii. 10.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 197. viii. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 86. viii. 12.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, p. 406. viii. 13.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 200.

Chap. viii., ver. 14.—"I am understanding; I have strength."

CONSIDER (1) the self-assertion of Christ; (2) the bearing of that self-assertion on certain difficulties of our day.

I. The self-assertion of Christ is exhibited in three ways:

(1) Christ claims a boundless power of satisfying human wants. He knows sin and sorrow through and through. Yet He never doubts His capacity of giving pardon and peace. (2) Christ claims for Himself the most transcendent ideals. The sun is not too glorious for Him: "I am the Light of the world. The morning star seen by the seer over the Grecian hills is not too fresh and lovely: "I am the Bright and Morning Star." (3) Christ claims the possession of absolute truth by the very form and mode as well as by the substance of His teaching. He does not speak as a technical philosopher. He does not laboriously draw conclusions from syllogisms. He is at the centre of truth. Thus very much of His teaching is conveyed in an oracular form. It is divinely epigrammatic.

II. Consider the bearing of this on the difficulty which seems to be felt with distressing poignancy by many just at present. I mean the tone of much of the record in the Old Testament. (1) The Old Testament is a progressive system. When we are confronted with such objections, we should ask ourselves whether the things objected to form part of that progressive system, taken at a point short of its completion. (2) The Old Testament contains the pathology and diagnosis of sin. Its therapeutics are in the Gospel. Do the things excepted to form part of this pathology? If so, they are necessarily there and necessarily revolting. The Bible if divine, is yet "divine with the imperfections of our life." Its pages are blistered with tears, and dripped with blood. Nay, they are sometimes splashed with mud. For sin is vulgar as well as awful. If it towers at times until it covers us with majestic shadows from awful heights, there are seasons when it grovels upon the dust in its meanness. (3) After all, it is chiefly to the thought of the text that we turn for confirmation. The great self-assertion of the "Amen" is our stay. We take the book as it is from the hand of Him who says, "I am understanding."

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *The Great Question*, p. 45.

REFERENCE: viii. 15.—J. Andrew, *Dundee Pulpit*, p. 169.

Chap. viii., ver. 17.—"I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me."

I. "I LOVE them that love Me." It might be inferred from such words as these, that man must love God as a preliminary to or condition of God's loving man. But the truth is that our love to God is nothing else but the reflection of God's love to us; in no way an earthly production, but is heavenly every

way—birth, nurture, end, and aim. God must first love us, so as not merely to surround us with mercies, not merely to make arrangements which render possible our salvation; but so as to enter into our souls, and there re-impress His own image, producing what we naturally have not—a sense of His love by generating our love in return. As we breathe because God hath breathed into us the breath of life, we love because God hath kindled in us a flame of affection; so that there can be no genuine love except as the result of a renewal of nature. When we answer to God's love, becoming new creatures through obeying the motions of His Spirit, and therefore having affections purified and sanctified so that they may fasten themselves once more on the Infinite and Invisible; then, as though He had not loved us before, so entire is the relationship into which we are brought, He speaks in the language of our text, "I love them that love Me."

II. "Those that seek Me early shall find Me." We do not argue from this that, if God have not been sought early it is in vain to seek Him at all. But, nevertheless, the explicit promise is to them that seek God early; and we may not, therefore, doubt that there are advantages to those who begin in their youth, which will always widely remove their case from that of others who give their first years to the world. Consider the motives which should urge the young to seek God early. (1) There is the acknowledged though practically forgotten fact, that the life of the young is as uncertain as that of the old—that health and strength are no security against the speedy approach of death. (2) If the text does not exclude those from finding who only seek at the last, it distinctly implies that they will have much greater difficulty than had they sought early. (3) As men grow older they gradually lose a relish for those enjoyments which have fascinated them in youth; so that they outlive the pleasures for which they have been content to peril their immortality. Is it not to insult God to offer Him the miserable remnant of life which you have kept from Him so long as it was possible to devote it to His enemies? You must seek God early, while there is a sacrifice to be made, while there are passions that may be mortified, advantages which may be resigned, pleasures which may be abandoned.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1684.

I. "I LOVE them that love Me." Consider what a blessed thing it must be to be loved by Jesus Christ,—by the Son of God Himself. (1) Jesus Christ is very great. (2) Jesus Christ is

very rich. (3) Jesus Christ is very good. (4) He pardons the sins of those whom He loves. (5) He gives them power to become good. (6) He takes care that none whom He loves shall be lost. (7) He is getting ready a place in heaven for those whom He loves.

II. Let us see who are those that Jesus Christ loves. "I love them that love Me." (1) Those who love Jesus Christ believe whatever He says in the Bible. (2) Those who love Jesus Christ try to please Him.

III. How are we to seek Jesus Christ? (1) We must seek Him in His own Book. (2) We must seek Him in His own House. (3) We must seek Him on our knees in prayer.

IV. "They shall find Me." You will find the Lord's presence in your own hearts and minds.

V. "Early." (1) Seeking early is the safest way. (2) Seeking early is the happiest way. (3) Seeking early is the easiest way. BISHOP RYLE, *Boys and Girls Playing*, p. 19.

CONSIDER the advantages of seeking early after God.

I. There is an incalculable advantage in beginning in season a work which we know to be long and difficult.

II. Another advantage of serving God in our youth is the defence which is thus set up against the encroachments of vice.

III. A third benefit is the promotion of happiness in the family circle, and the beneficent influence thus exerted upon companions and friends.

IV. Another blessing is the indescribable satisfaction which is afforded to parents and friends.

V. A fifth advantage of seeking God in youth is the ready access which it affords to a throne of grace.

VI. Another advantage is that we are thus prepared to meet with a smile the dark frowns of adversity.

VII. We are thus enabled to await, with calm and holy resignation, the coming of death.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 319.

REFERENCES: viii. 17.—F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 189. viii. 18-21.—W. Arnot. *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 202. viii. 22-31.—*Ibid.*, p. 205. viii. 22-36.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 195.

Chap. viii., vers. 22-30.—"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old," etc.

THIS is a description of the original solitude of God by a witness, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

I. This solitude was serene and happy. Even among men solitude is not always desolation. To make solitude happy two elements are required: first, that the mind be at ease and satisfied with itself; secondly, that it be employed also in some object out of itself. The serenity of God was, so to speak, composed of three elements: perfect self-satisfaction, profound self-contemplation, and the prescience, and in a sense the presence, of all created history, for "known unto God were all His works, from the foundation of the world."

II. But there was society also with God. "I was by Him as one brought up by Him; I was daily His delight," says the Logos. This shows a certain mysterious fellowship subsisting between the various Persons in the Godhead. From the glimpse given in the text of this communion, we gather that it was (1) familiar; (2) had always existed; (3) was incessant; (4) was unspeakably delightful.

III. Let us marvel especially at one part of the Divine employment throughout eternity. That is revealed to have been thinking of, nay, rejoicing in, man. How it elevates our conception of man to think of him forming one of the principal subjects of thought to God in His own serene eternity! And yet, how it humbles us to remember that God then thought of us as fallen, miserable, guilty beings, whom He must redeem from the horrible pit and the miry clay!

IV. Let us remember that while there is a sense in which we are always, there is a sense in which we are never, alone. Every soul is a Juan Fernandez—a solitary island with only one inhabitant; but that inhabitant is God. We must all one day meet this sole and silent one. The "lonely soul must flee to the lonely God."

G. GILFILLAN, *Alpha and Omega*, vol. i., p. 1.

Chap. viii., vers. 23-25.—"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was," etc.

WISDOM meant more to the Jews than to us, who have lost the sense of man's unity by subdividing his faculties. It embraced to the Jew the mental and material range of the spiritual life: the ministers and magicians of Pharaoh are wise; so are Solomon and the angels; but also, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and the wise man is the ideally good man in Prov. xvi. 21, 23.

I. Wisdom is ever at work in the world. Civilisation is nature inspired by man's wisdom. The Book of Proverbs does

little else than honour continuously the victorious mind of man.

II. We find that man is not final—original. A source of wisdom behind is suggested; our partial and fitful intellect points back. God is the fountain; we are the channels. God's wisdom touched the gross chaos with intention, and its epic is the first chapter of Genesis. The only beautiful thing in mechanical and other processes is the reflection of God's wisdom in ours. What a great hoard of humility we should have if this were recognised!

III. We need our beliefs for ordinary life; sorrow is inevitable, and the ghastly thing about it is, that we feel as if it were pre-ordained when we are in it. It is like the mountain shadow, or the crouching lion awaiting the weary pilgrim on the plain. Wisdom has something to say: "I am older than sorrow." She bears testimony to God's plan, to His love, justice, and thoughtfulness. And so in temptation, when the world seems to be spinning a net round us, wisdom soothes us. She is before temptation. This Wisdom is Christ, the "Word" of St. John. What wonder, since "Word" is the utterance of Wisdom! In the Atonement Christ is peculiarly the Wisdom of the world; He conquers a lower obstacle; God's love, before confined, pours into the sinner over a broken barrier.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Oxford Magazine*, June 3rd, 1885.

Chap. viii., vers. 29, 30.—"When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight,—rejoicing always before Him."

I. IT is in the active service of life, in the work of the market-place, in the interchange of thought and the collision of minds differently constituted, that wisdom speaks to us. She comes as with an evangel, which she proclaims to all, which shuts out none but those who shut it out, seeking in her infinite compassion the ignorant and the foolish.

II. Wisdom yearns, as it were, for human sympathy, and the wide spaces of the universe would seem dark and cold to her if man were not there. She "rejoices in the inhabited parts of the earth;" her "delights are with the sons of men."

III. Wisdom and the Eternal Word are one. Christ, who is made unto us sanctification and redemption, is also made unto us Wisdom. This truth suggests counsels, warnings, hopes,

encouragements. (1) To many among us who make it their work to be observers of the facts and students of the laws of nature, the truth which is thus revealed gives a new ground for thankfulness and hope. The place whereon they stand is holy ground. All traces of design, order, development, the unfolding of the higher from the lower,—what are these but marks of the Eternal Wisdom manifesting Itself according to Its own determinate counsel and foreknowledge? (3) But it must not be forgotten that the Eternal Word reveals Himself as One whose delights are with the sons of men. It is an evil and hateful thing in His sight when truth is divorced from love; when the dreamer, or the theorist, or the observer, lives in his own lordly pleasure-house of knowledge or of beauty, and shuts out all sympathy with human suffering and human weakness. (3) The identity of the Wisdom of the Book of Proverbs with the Word made flesh tells us of yet another path to win that treasure which is far above rubies—*via crucis, via lucis.* The path that leads to light and truth and wisdom is no path of pleasantness and ease. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Those who follow Him as witnesses to the truth may well be contented to bear His reproach. E. H. PLUMPTRE, *Theology and Life*, p. 161.

REFERENCES: viii. 31.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 127. viii. 32.—J. Wells, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 41.

Chap. viii., ver. 36.—"He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul."

WHO is the "Me"? It is Wisdom. Who is the Wisdom? It is Christ; Christ is the Wisdom of God. What is the particular truth of the text? It is this, that sin is not only an offence to God, whom no man hath seen or can see, but it is a distinct and irreparable injury to the man, the sinner himself. It may be difficult to show men that they ought not to sin against a being whom they have never seen, or against spiritual, moral laws which they had no share in determining. Man may, under these circumstances, get up a kind of metaphysical defence against such obedience; but this unhappy possibility is met and overruled by the unalterable and appalling fact that not to obey is to suffer, to sin is to decline and perish, to go away from truth and purity and honour is to go into darkness and shame and intolerable torment. That is the tremendous hold which God has over you.

I. You have a strong emotional nature; you allow that. My question is, What are you going to make of it? Suppress it? Then you will wrong your own soul. Turn it towards low objects? Then you will debase one of the highest gifts of your nature. You must use it. Christ's great appeal is to our feeling, our emotion, our homage, our loyalty. "He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul;" tears the stops out of the great organ of his being.

II. You have a great imaginative nature. What are you going to do with it? He that sinneth against that wrongeth his own soul. The whole material universe is a bird's small cage compared with the infinite resources of Him who fainteth not, neither is weary, and of whose understanding there is no searching. Whoso sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul, belittles himself, trivialises his own nature, wastes his powers, shuts himself up in a cell, when he might be enjoying the liberty of an ever-expanding firmament.

III. You have a profound moral nature. What are you going to make of it? The Lord brings us to practical judgments, to distinct personal consequences of our action, and we who would shrink from any merely metaphysical divinity, from any philosophical conception of right, are bound to feel in our own flesh and blood and bones that we have done wrong. What are you going to do? The good man makes the best of his powers; the Christian man gets the best out of himself; righteousness makes a man realise the grandest of his powers, the widest of his capacities, and imparts to him as he goes along such instalments of heaven as are harmonisable with a life on earth.

PARKER, *Fountain*, Oct. 18th 1877.

Chap. ix., ver. 1.—"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars."

IF the Wisdom spoken of by Solomon be none other than Christ, the house of Wisdom must be the spiritual house which Christ builds—His Church. This house is described as being strong and stable. Wisdom hath hewn out her seven pillars. Seven is the number constantly used in the Bible to typify perfection or completeness: and the meaning is, that the building rests on so many and such strong pillars that, once erected, it will never fall.

I. The first pillar is that of Faith, which rests the most directly upon the foundation of all—that Rock which is Christ.

II. The second pillar is that of Hope. Despair is a deadly element in the spiritual house. There is no greater traitor in our camp than he who cries, "All is lost."

III. The pillar of Love binds the whole building together, "the very bond of peace and of all virtues." If faith be the foundation-stone on which the building rests, and hope the soaring tower which points to heaven, love is the porch by which all must enter, and without which they are intruders, who have climbed up some other way.

IV. There is the pillar of Discretion: the spirit which knows what to say and what not to say, what to do and what to leave undone. We are often discredited with the world because we lack this pillar in our building.

V. There is the pillar of Sacrifice. There is no room for drones in the hive, no place in the house for those who have not helped to build it, or are not helping to make it serve the purpose for which it was built.

VI. There is the pillar of Truthfulness. As a matter of eventual success, no less than of Christian duty, we must renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

VII. The last pillar is that of Memory. Not only is the Church built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, we are surrounded also by a great cloud of witnesses, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues—a multitude which no man can number, who form the unbroken line of our spiritual ancestry. We must not cut ourselves off from these. The memories of the past belong to the Church, as much as the hopes of the future.

A. BLOMFIELD, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 260.

REFERENCES: ix. 1-5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxii., p. 80; C. Kingsley, *Discipline and other Sermons*, p. 11; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 70.

Chap. ix., vers. 1-6.

THE marriage supper for the king's son.

I. The house. The frame is set up from everlasting, well-ordered in all things, and sure. The tried Foundation is the Lord our Righteousness. The seven pillars indicate, in Oriental form, that its supports and ornaments are perfect in strength and beauty.

II. The feast prepared. The provisions of God's house are

wholesome, various, plentiful. Whatever the covenant provides, the true Church diligently sets forth in the ordinances before the people.

III. The inviting messenger. These are the ambassadors whom Christ employs to carry the message of His mercy to their brethren.

IV. The invited guests. The message is specially addressed to the simple. Those who are conscious of ignorance are ever most ready to learn the wisdom from above.

V. The argument by which the invitation is supported is: (1) positive, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled;" and (2) negative, "Forsake the foolish and live." The grand turning-point is to get the prodigal to break off from that which destroys him.

W. ARNOT, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 209.

REFERENCE: ix. 1-18.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 207.

Chap. ix., vers. 3, 4, 16.—Wisdom "crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither:" . . . The foolish woman sitteth "in the high places of the city to call passengers: . . . Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither."

I. CHOOSE. Here is the manliness of manhood, that a man has a reason for what he does, and has a will in doing it. Be the masters and lords of the circumstances in which you stand. Put your heel on temptations if they come to you. Remember there is the alternative, the one thing or the other, and it becomes you to make up your mind, to resolve, to know why you have done so, and to act because and as you have resolved.

II. Choose wisdom. There are the two claimants that are standing wooing your affections: Wisdom, on the one side; and this "foolish woman," the embodiment and impersonation of Folly, on the other. (1) At first sight, on a cursory reading of the earlier chapters of this Book of Proverbs, it may seem as if all that was meant by wisdom was a shrewd earthly common-sense and worldly prudence; while folly, on the other hand, may seem to be mere ignorance and want of understanding. But look a little closer, and you will see that the wisdom spoken of in all these chapters is closely connected, not only with clearness of the well-furnished head, but with uprightness of the heart. (*a*) The wisdom that he speaks about is wisdom that has rectitude for an essential part of it, the fibre of its very being a

righteousness and holiness. If a man would be wise it must be with a wisdom that was in God before it is in him. (*b*) The true wisdom is no mere quality, but a living person; her voice is the voice of Christ, our Brother, our Sacrifice, and our Lord. (2) Mark the manner of these appeals and the consequences of listening to them. The wisdom of our text appeals to conscience. Folly appeals only to the sense of pleasure and desire of gratification. Severe and pure though the beauty of wisdom is, yet "her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace." "All the things thou canst desire" are not to be compared with what she has to bestow.

III. Choose Christ now. There is no more dark remembrance to a Christian man than the early days when he put off decision. Every day that you live makes it less likely that you will choose. Every day that you live makes it harder for you to choose aright. Every day adds to the heap of wasted hours that you will carry regretfully with you to your graves, if ever you give the trust of your spirits, the love of your hearts, the obedience of your lives to Christ Jesus at all.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 304.

REFERENCES: ix. 5.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 48. ix. 7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 183. ix. 7-9.—W. Arnot *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 213.

Chap. ix., ver. 10.—**"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."**

I. NOTHING can prosper long that runs its head against any of the great walls of the universe. Life is known by its manifestations; no one has ever seen it. And no one ever sees the invisible barriers that close like a prison round the living, whenever they violate the laws of life. There *are* unseen, pitiless limits existing—walls of adamant, against which the waves of human passion and human folly dash, and break, and are shattered without mercy, even though every drop be a life, and every life be dashed to pieces in hopeless agony in the vain endeavour to go its own way, and set its own will as the judge what that way shall be. There is an eternal march of judgment, which they who choose can see. And calm, and clear, and pitiless on every side, amidst the noise of ignorant self-will, the clash of blinded passion, and wisdom blinder still, the voiceless warning strikes upon the world; and the great prison walls close in on those who will have it so.

II. It may be said: "These are but words; what proof is there of this invisible, everlasting wall of doom, and of the unseen

executioners, God's secret police, that arrest the guilty and the careless, self-indulgent fools?" I answer: "Take any form of vice you like, give it power, give it wealth, and then—wait a few years and see what comes of it. Watch the curse day by day, and hour by hour, walking by the victim's side; watch him dragged from bad to worse; stand in his dreary home when the last scene comes,—and doubt no more of God's great prison walls on earth."

III. But it is equally true that the great laws of life act for good to those who follow them. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." God has not only set His prison walls that punish, and appointed His secret police of vengeance that avenge; but He has also set within the broad space of the world the protecting walls of the fold of Christ, the happy home of those who follow Him, where His sheep go in and out, and find pasture.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 358.

REFERENCES: ix. 10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 156. ix. 12.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 219. ix. 13-18.—*Ibid.*, p. 221. x. 1.—*Ibid.*, p. 229. x. 4.—*Ibid.*, p. 234. x. 1-5.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 219.

Chap. x., ver. 5.—"He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame."

SUMMER is the right season for gathering in the harvest. To say, then, that it is wise to gather in summer is only saying, in other words, that a wise man will make the most of his opportunities, and will gather whatever he has to gather at the best and fittest season.

I. Is not this a practical lesson for children, as soon as they begin to learn? Their summer is the time they spend at school. That time is just as much the season for them to learn in, as the month of August is the season for their fathers to reap in.

II. Is not this a practical lesson for those who are in the prime and strength of life? These are in the summer of their days, so far as practice is concerned. The seeds of the good principles which were sown in them during their childhood should now be springing up in them, and ripening and bearing fruit. Do not sleep in this your spiritual harvest of duty to God and man. If you are far gone in manhood, and have slept hitherto, call to mind St. Paul's words, that now it is hign time for you to awake out of that sleep. If you are just entering

into manhood, beware of falling asleep. If it would be madness to put off the harvest of the bread that perishes, how much worse than madness must it be to put off the harvest of holiness and obedience!

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 269

REFERENCE: x. 6-12.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol i., p. 230.

Chap. x., ver. 7.—"The memory of the just is blessed."

I. WHO are meant by the "just" to whom blessedness is here attributed? By the just alluded to here are meant those who, having felt the power of God in that call which God makes to men to be His servants, have obeyed that call, and have given themselves to the service of the Most High. God calls everyone to do some work for Him, and He expects everyone to do that work "justly." (1) The justice of the just will consist, first, of that which lies at the very basis of all true religion, namely, prayer. It is utterly impossible for the inner life of the true Christian to be supported without prayer. You do not expect a man to battle against a mighty current without stretching forth his hands to swim; even so, a man cannot live in the tossing sea of doubt and difficulty without stretching forth his hands, in the spirit of grace and of supplication, to implore assistance through the name and on account of the merits of Jesus Christ alone. (2) Again, the justice of the just consists in a constant endeavour to cultivate such a spirit of faith as shall promote an abiding sense of God's presence and of Christ's love. There can be no godliness where God is not in all the thoughts. There can be no true Christianity save where the heart is so dependent upon Christ that all hope is based on His Atonement, all joy looked for through His Cross. (3) Again, the justice alluded to in the text may be said to imply a constant endeavour to further the true interests of the Church of God. Everyone who has become a member of Christ's body must take heed to, and respect, that body of which he is a member.

II. What does the text say of the just man? It says that his memory is blessed. His memory is sweet and precious. His name is ever spoken of with honour and commendation. "Men to whom he has been useful, either in things spiritual or in things temporal, bless him whilst he is alive, and after death they pronounce him to be blessed." "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

E. CHEESE, *Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduates' Journal*, May 12th, 1881

I. "THE memory of the just is blessed"—self-evidently so, for the mind blesses it, reverts to it with complacency, mingled with solemnity, returns to it with delight from the sight of the living evil in the world, sometimes even prefers this silent society to the living good.

II. Their memory is blessed when we consider them as practical illustrations, verifying examples of the excellence of genuine religion, and that it is a noble thing in human nature, and makes, and alone makes, that nature noble.

III. Their memory is blessed while we regard them as diminishing to our view the repulsiveness and horror of death. Our Lord's dying was the fact that threw out the mightiest agency to this effect. But, in their measure, His faithful disciples have done the same.

IV. Their memory is blessed as combined with the whole progress of the cause of God on earth, with its living agency through every stage. Think what they have been employed and empowered to do in the propagation of truth, in the incessant warfare against all manner of evil, in the exemplification of all the virtues by which he could be honoured.

V. Is it not a reasonable object of Christian desire to leave a memory that shall be "blessed"? Not a passion for vain-glory, not that so-extolled aspiring to endless fame. But a desire that the remembrance which will remain in the minds of those who are to survive or follow should not be one causing pain, disappointment, or shame. A wish to be, in remembrance, numbered with the faithful and zealous servants of God and Christ.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 220.

REFERENCES: x. 7.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 236; D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 328. x. 8.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 238. x. 9.—*Ibid.*, p. 240; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 16. x. 11.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 242. x. 12.—W. R. Nicoll, *Calls to Christ*, p. 41. x. 13-18.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 241. x. 14.—*Ibid.*, p. 245. x. 15.—*Ibid.*, p. 247. x. 18-21.—*Ibid.*, p. 255. x. 19-32.—*Ibid.*, p. 254.

Chap. x., ver. 22.—"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

LOOK at two facts in connection with the Divine blessing exhibited here:—

I. It enriches. (1) Sometimes the blessing of the Lord is material and temporal wealth, as in the case of Abram. (2) More frequently it is not wealth, but food convenient for us.

(3) Godly contentment in poverty is another form of the blessing of the Lord. (4) This blessing turns every possession into wealth. (5) There are some things wrapped up in the blessing of the Lord which are of priceless value. He who has the blessing of salvation is rich indeed.

II. It has no drawbacks. (1) There is no remorse as to the means of acquisition, when the good things you possess you have received as a blessing from the Lord. (2) To acquire good things is to prevent all misgiving as to the right of possession. (3) In this state there is no misgiving as to the power of keeping what we have; and further, there is no alloy in the use of enjoyment.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 1.

THE truth here is twofold. It means that God's blessing gives material wealth; and also, that they are rich who have that blessing, although they get nothing more.

I. The silver and the gold are His, and He gives them to whomsoever He will. He who rules in the highest, reaches down to the minutest concerns of this world, and controls them all.

II. His blessing makes rich. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Here is a mixture prescribed by the All-wise, for satisfying a soul, and attaining success in life. "He addeth no sorrow with it." The word seems to imply that there are two ways of acquiring wealth. Some people grow rich without God's blessing, and some people grow rich by it. It would appear that the god of the world gives riches to his subjects sometimes, when neither giver nor getter owns the supremacy of the Almighty, and that God Himself gives riches to some who are His children. Wherein lies the difference, since both the godless and the godly have gotten wealth? It lies here: He addeth no sorrow with it, but that other lord does.

W. ARNOT, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 259.

REFERENCES: x. 22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 62. x. 23 (with xiv. 9).—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 264. x. 24.—*Ibid.*, p. 268. x. 25.—*Ibid.*, p. 273. x. 26.—*Ibid.*, p. 274.

Chap. x., ver. 29.—"The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destr ction shall be to the workers of iniquity."

THE words "shall be" in the last clause are a supplement. They are quite unnecessary, and in fact they rather hinder the sense. They destroy the completeness of the antithesis between the two halves of the verse. If you leave them out, and suppose

that the "way of the Lord" is what is spoken of in both clauses, you get a far deeper and fuller meaning. It is the same way which is strength to one man and ruin to another, and the moral nature of the man determines which it shall be to him.

I. The "way of the Lord" means here, not the road in which God prescribes that we should walk, but the road in which He Himself walks; or in other words, the sum of the Divine action, the solemn footsteps of God through creation, providence, and history. The same way, the same set of facts, the same continuous stream of tendency, which is all with and for every form of good, is all against every form of evil. God's way has a bright side and a dark. You may take which you like. The way of the Lord must touch *your* way. You cannot alter that necessity. Your path must either run parallel in the same direction with His, and then all His power will be an impulse to bear you onward; or it must run in the opposite direction, and then all His power will be for your ruin, and the collision with it will crush you as a ship is crushed like an eggshell when it strikes an iceberg. You *can* choose which of these shall befall you.

II. Look at the application or illustration of the principles that are here. (1) The order of the universe, is such that righteousness is life and sin is death. (2) In our physical life, as a rule, virtue makes strength, sin brings punishment. (3) In higher regions, on the whole, goodness makes blessedness, and evil brings ruin. All the powers of God's universe and all the tenderness of God's heart, are on the side of the man that does right. (4) This same fact of the twofold aspect and operation of the one way of the Lord will be made yet more evident in the future. I can conceive it possible that the one manifestation of God in a future life may be in substance the same, and yet that it may produce opposite effects upon oppositely disposed souls. (5) The self-revelation of God has this double aspect: every truth concerning Him may be either a joy or a terror to men. As the very crown of the ways of God, the work of Christ and the record of it in the Gospel have most eminently this double aspect. That which is meant to be the savour of life unto life must either be that or the savour of death unto death.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 279.

Chap. xi., ver. 1.—"A false balance is an abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is His delight."

OUR God is emphatically a God of justice. Wherever there is

deceit in the world, wherever injury, wherever oppression, there is God's anger and loathing accompanying it.

I. The false balance, which is an abomination to the Lord, where do we not see it around us? Of every rank and class some, and far too many, are, and are allowed to be, and are tolerated as, men of fraud, men of mere shine—workers and upholders of deceit.

II. It is obvious that we must not begin with mere practical details, if we would be right in this matter. The secret of all wrong is the false balance within the heart; the real cheating begins there. An unfair dealer has defrauded himself, before ever he defrauded another. And this is a most important consideration for all of us. Have we the balance right within? In other words, is our estimate of men and things, which guides our actions, the real and true one; or some artificial one altogether wrong, and leading us altogether wrong?

III. Were buyers honest sellers would by compulsion be honest too. If the Saviour whom we preach were really believed in by you, as having bought each of you with His own precious blood, you would be to the full as careful in this matter as any of Christ's ministers could wish you to be. The old want is still the pressing one; the old cry still the necessary one for this generation to raise in the ear of heaven, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 34.

REFERENCES: xi. 1.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 279. xi. 1-9.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 268. xi. 2.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 285. xi. 3.—*Ibid.*, p. 288. xi. 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 93. xi. 4, 24-28.—*Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 345. xi. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 157. xi. 9.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, p. 290. xi. 10-17.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 277.

Chap. xi., ver. 13.—"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit, concealeth the matter."

I. A TALEBEARER. One celebrated nation of antiquity used to express this man's character by a very significant figure. They called a talebearer a "seedpicker." There are men in the world who live by their seed-collecting: by going about here and there, from house to house, from street to street, through a town large or small, and gathering together all the little stories which can be told or made about the neighbours who are dwelling securely by them, and ignorant of the calumnies by which they are assailed.

II. A talebearer revealeth secrets. Many motives go to make up a talebearer. (1) Perhaps he is a witty man. He can intimate, rather than express, a scandal. His representations of character are pungent. His imitations, his caricatures of manner and of speech, are irresistibly comic. In society he is the life of his company. It is not till he is silent and departed—perhaps not even then—that you begin to feel that there has been virtually a talebearer among you, and that he has been revealing unkind secrets. (2) Or he may be a man in whose own conscience there is a sore place. He knows something against himself. He is conscious of some lurking, some secret, some bosom sin. And it is a relief to him to hope that others are not so much better than himself. He finds a solace in his wretchedness in making company for his sin. (3) There are others who cannot bear superiors. They do not like superiors in station, but superiors in character they cannot brook. Their only comfort is in a general disbelief of virtue. A ridiculous story to tell of the eminently good is to them as a draught of water to the thirsty.

III. "He that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." He does not say what matter. But we may understand it to include two things: that which has been entrusted to him in the secrecy of confidence, and that which has become known to him to another's disparagement.

If we could part for ever with the disposition of the talebearer, we should have parted with that which, more than anything else, confuses and perplexes and embitters human life. It is the want of self-knowledge which makes us so keen-sighted. It is the want of acquaintance with Christ, as our Propitiation first, and then as our Example, which makes it possible for us to sit in the tribunal of judgment.

C. J. Vaughan, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 1.

References: xi. 13.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 292. xi. 15.—*Ibid.*, p. 294. xi. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 128. xi. 17.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 303. xi. 18.—*Ibid.*, p. 305. xi. 18-23.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 287. xi. 19, 21.—H. Armstrong Hall, *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 271. xi. 20.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 307; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 281.

Chap. xi., ver. 21.—"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered."

The one peculiar and characteristic sin of the world is this,

that whereas God would have us live for the life to come, the world would make us live for this life. It takes, as the main scope of human exertion, an end which God forbids, and consequently all that it does becomes evil, because directed to a wrong end.

Men seem made for this world; this is what prevails on them to neglect the next world; they think they have reason for concluding that this world is the world for which they are to labour, and to which they are to devote their faculties.

I. There are a number of faculties and talents which seem only to exist in this world, and to be impossible in another. Our aim, men say, must be an aim of this life, our end of action must be in this world, because our talents point that way.

II. Another consideration of the same kind is the existence of national character. This seems to them to be a providential mark of what the world is intended to be. One nation is manly, and another is brave but cruel, and a third is sagacious, and a fourth is energetic and busy. These, then, it is argued, are the qualities of mind for which this life is intended. Religion is for the next world, not for this.

III. Men generally apply this argument to the case of individuals. They go into the world, and they find individuals of this or that character, and not religious; and hence they argue that religion is but a theory, because it is not on the face of society.

IV. Another consideration which the world urges in its warfare against religion is that religion is unnatural. It is objected that religion does not bring the elementary and existing nature of man to its highest perfection, but thwarts and impairs it, and provides for a second and new nature.

V. The strongest argument which the world uses in its favour is the actual success of its experiment in cultivating the natural faculties of body and mind: for success seems a fresh mark of God's will, over and above the tendencies of nature. Men may or may not have the fear of God before their eyes, yet they seem to go on equally well either way. Let anyone betake himself to the world, and go through but one day in it, and he will understand what this argument is which the very face of society presents, namely, that religion is not needed for the world, and therefore is of no great importance.

Let us leave the world, manifold and various as it is; let us leave it to follow its own devices, and let us turn to the living

and true God, who has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ. So that when the end comes, and the multitudes who have joined hands in evil are punished, we may be of those who, in the words of the text, are "delivered."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 78.

REFERENCES: xi. 21.—E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 11. xi. 22.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 308. xi. 23.—*Ibid.*, p. 312. xi. 24.—Parker, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 37; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 315; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 161. xi. 24-31.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 295.

Chap. xi., ver. 25.—"He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

I. THE theory can be submitted to a practical test.

II. All true getting is based upon true giving.

III. Self-care is self-defeat. We must work for others if we would be truly blessed ourselves.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 61.

REFERENCES: xi. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 626, and *Morning by Morning*, p. 234; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 319; Bishop Thorold, *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxi., p. 20; *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 94. xi. 26.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 323; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 642. xi. 28.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 327.

Chap. xi., ver. 30.—"He that winneth souls is wise."

I. THE true Christian is not satisfied to watch and work for his own salvation, but he remembers the souls of others also. Every soul won for Christ is a token of His favour. The success of our efforts proves that we have used the right means in the right way, so that the planting and the watering of the human agency has been crowned by the Divine Spirit with an abundant increase.

II. The text contains a significant hint as to the mode of carrying on this blessed work. "He that *winneth* souls is wise." The Christian is to do good, not by force or harshness, but by gentle persuasion and persevering kindness. To win, as in a game, implies skill in adapting the means to the end.

III. He who would be successful in winning souls to Christ must be (1) considerate and thoughtful; (2) he must have courage; (3) tender, unaffected sympathy.

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 418.

REFERENCES: xi. 30.—J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 373; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, pp. 148, 151, 154, 158; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 850, and vol. xxii.,

No. 1292; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 333; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 346; E. Medley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 289; J. Morgan, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 334.

Chap. xi., ver. 31.—"Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner."

I. God is impartial. He is no respecter of persons, but causing His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and His rain to fall on the just and on the unjust; and so rewarding every man according to his work, paying him for all work done, of whatever kind it may be. Some work for this world, which we do see, and God gives them what they earn in this life; some work for the world above, which we cannot see, and God gives them what they earn in this life for ever and ever likewise. If a man wishes for treasure on earth he can have it if he will, and enjoy it as long as it lasts. If a man wishes for treasure in heaven he can have it too, and enjoy it as long as it lasts. God deals fairly with both, and pays both what they have earned.

II. Those who long for sanctification and desire to be holy, even as their Father in heaven is perfect, are they that have treasure in heaven. But how are such souls recompensed in the earth? Is not a man recompensed in the earth whenever he can lift up his heart unto the Lord, and behold His glory above all the earth? The world of man looks brighter to him then, in spite of all his sins and sorrows; for he sees the Lord ruling it, the Lord forgiving it, the Lord saving it. He takes heart and hope for the poor earth and says, "The earth is not deserted; mankind is not without a Father, a Saviour, a Teacher, a King." Just in proportion as a man walks with God, just in proportion as the eyes of his soul are opened by the Spirit of God, he recovers the privilege which Adam lost when he fell. He hears the Word of the Lord walking among the trees of the garden in the cool of the day, and instead of trying, like guilty Adam, to hide himself from his Maker, answers with reverence and yet with joy: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 265.

References: xii. 1.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 336. xii. 4.—*Ibid.*, p. 340; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 128. xii. 10.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 343. xii. 13.—*Ibid.*, p. 345. xii. 20-28.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 324.

Chap. xii., ver. 22.—"Lying lips are abomination to the Lord."

I. To tell lies is pitiful and mean. Nobody who is honourable

and high-minded will stoop to do it. Even when we suffer for telling the truth, it is far better to have the courage to stick to it.

II. Lying is a hateful thing, because it has brought so much misery into the world. The safety and happiness of God's children depend on their telling the truth.

III. Lying is wicked. Wrong-doing consists in disobeying God's holy laws, and since He so positively bids us tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, we commit sin every time that we fail to do it.

IV. Another reason why lying should be abhorred is because it is dangerous. Even when God does not punish liars in this world, they will not escape in the next. Hear what the Bible says about it: "All liars have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. xxi. 8).

J. N. NORTON, *The King's Ferry-boat*, p. 33.

REFERENCES: xii. 22.—R. Newton, *Bible Warnings*, p. 114. xii. 26.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 178; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 2nd series, p. 419. xiii. 12.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 347. xiii. 15.—*Ibid.*, p. 352; R. Newton, *Bible Warnings*, p. 91. xiii. 16-21.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 347. xiii.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 333.

Chap. xiii., ver. 20.—"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

I. OF all the external circumstances which mould our life and character, our daily companionship may be said to be among the most potent, and the Bible utterances are very strong on this subject. Sometimes they dwell specially on the causes that draw men together, assuming that like chooses like, and that a man may in fact be known by his associates. But more frequently the texts warn us rather of the consequences of intimacy than of the causes of it. They warn or exhort about companionship because we become, as they assume, what our companions are; because men who live together in close contact and communion mould each other, as iron sharpeneth iron.

II. It is probable, indeed, that we should all direct our life, and choose our companionship, more carefully if we duly considered the long results of these things; if we remembered that in moral relations, as in other matters, it is not easy to start afresh when we please and unencumbered. Friendships are two-edged tools, which may open up for you the way to life or the way to death.

III. There is no more certain support to the weak or the young than the feeling of nearness to some friend whom they know to be strong and pure, earnest for what is right and a hater of evil. Our companionship with such an one is like living continually in a pure and healthy pasture, and as the nearest earthly resemblance to walking with God in Christ, as we hope in our perfection to walk with Him hereafter. These are the true servants of Christ, and they only have the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

J. PERCIVAL, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 155.

REFERENCES: xiii. 20.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 355; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 75.

Chap. xiii., ver. 21.—"Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed."

THE expectation of concealment, and therefore of impunity, encourages the great mass of men in the sins which they commit. But you may take the very case in which, of all others, it would seem as though sin had been committed with impunity—the case in which a sin is finally pardoned for the sake of the Redeemer—and prove with the greatest accuracy of demonstration that nothing can be more unfounded than the expecting to escape all consequences in escaping the first. There is a perfect possibility—to use the very lowest word—that the man who commits a sin and afterwards repents and is forgiven, may have to bear a burden, through all his after-days on earth, which is distinctly the entailment or consequence of that sin; and with so fatal a power may his transgressions act on every moment of his eternity, that he shall occupy for ever a lower station in the glorified Church than would have been his had the transgression not been wrought.

II. There is something very peculiar in the expression, "evil pursueth the sinner." It is as though it hunted him with the greatest pertinacity, tracking him through the various scenes of life, and then, when perhaps he has all the appearance of having evaded his enemy, and seems, as it were, effectually concealed, the enemy darts upon him suddenly, exacting all its punishment. You cannot think of evil pursuing, and then finding out, a man without thinking of that man as apparently armed against detection: for there is something in the expression which indicates search on the part of the sin, and therefore concealment on the part of the sinner. So that it may be at a moment when there is no remembrance of what has been done, or at least no apprehension of being called to a reckoning, that

the crime reappears in the form of vengeance, and proves with what unwearied hostility it has followed the offender.

III. We believe it to be equally true that sins wrought after conversion are not suffered to pass unpunished, however they may be pardoned through the propitiation of Christ. If God is to show displeasure at the iniquities of His own people as well as of His enemies, it must be shown in this life; and hence we suppose it is true that "those whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," not only because the chastisements prepare for glory, and, therefore, prove love, but also because chastisements are consequences of sin in those whom God loves, and must be experienced on this side of the grave.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1792.

REFERENCES: xiii. 22-25.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 355. xiii. 24.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 359.

Chap. xiv., ver. 1.—"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."

IF you ask what God and the word of God mean by wisdom and folly, the answer will embrace three particulars: on the side of wisdom, these—forethought, earnestness, perseverance; on the side of folly, in like manner, these—improvidence, irresolution, unsteadiness. Corresponding to these three qualities of the builder are the three conditions of building: (1) To build you must have a plan; (2) building requires toil; (3) The proof of the building is growth. What now, is the house?

I. There is the house of the mind. It is the bounden duty of each one to build on some plan, and to begin early. If a plan is the first condition of building, toil, honest toil, is the second; and perseverance, brave and steadfast, is the third, and the most decisive.

II. The house of the life. Every one of us has a life—the most weighty word, the most mysterious possession, the most responsible charge. It is a matter almost of life and death to make choice, amongst many possibilities, of the work which is to fill our lifetime. Wisdom will forecast, even in these things, the plan of her future.

III. We should have missed the very point of the text if we did not see, in the house spoken of, the house of the everlasting hope. Have you so much as settled the plan of this house of the hope? What is your idea of the thing to be built? Let us not trifle with the house of the great hope. Let us lay deep

the foundation, than which no man can really lay any other. Let us seize earnestly, let us hold tenaciously, any fragment of Divine truth which conscience attests and the soul can echo; let us piece each to each, with a new realisation until the whole stands out at last in its breadth and in its satisfaction; at the end of all, God Himself shall consciously enter, and fill the house of our soul's hope with the glorious illumination of His presence.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Counsels to Young Students*, p. 31.

REFERENCES: xiv. 1-6.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 368. xiv. 6.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 367. xiv. 7.—*Ibid.*, p. 373. xiv. 7-12.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 378.

Chap. xiv., ver. 9.—"Fools make a mock at sin."

I. THE various ways in which men make a mock at sin may be summed up under two heads: by their words, and by their actions. We show our scorn and contempt of a thing in our words, when we speak carelessly of it, or laugh at it, or turn it into ridicule. We show it in our actions, when we live in such a manner as proves that we have no value or regard for it. Even of the first kind of mockery, the mockery of words, few are wholly innocent; of the last kind of mockery, the mockery of deeds, all have been more or less guilty.

II. The guilt of such mockery is too plain; the folly is the folly of playing with death. It is the folly of provoking God to cut us off in the midst of our calculating wickedness. Above all is such conduct folly, because we are disabling our hearts and souls more and more for the work of repentance, without which we know and believe we can have no part in the promises of the Gospel. For nothing is more certain than that the longer a man persists in sin the harder it is to leave it off. His heart is deadened; his conscience is blunted; his soul closes itself by little and little against the impulses of the Holy Spirit.

III. If the end of the foolish mockers is so certain and terrible, let us seek wisdom,—that true wisdom which cometh from above, and which is first pure, then peaceable, full of mercy and gentleness, and of all good works. All who lack wisdom must ask it of God; no one had ever enough of it; no one has enough of it to learn its value without wishing for more.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 215.

I. IT is requisite that we learn of God what is the evil of sin—

making His testimony in this, as in all other matters, the subject of faith. (1) The circumstance of our being an interested party incapacitates us for forming a correct judgment of the evil. (2) We are incapacitated for giving judgment in consequence of our moral sense being blunted by the continual presentation of sin before our eyes, in the conduct of others. (3) We are incompetent to form a sufficient judgment on the evil of sin, in consequence of our inability to see all its mischievous effects.

II. Consider the judgment of God on sin. (1) In His word He expresses moral disapprobation of it. (2) He threatens to avenge sin with death, spiritual and eternal. (3) He has avenged, and continues to avenge, the transgression of His law, as an earnest of His executing to the full its penalty in the world to come. (4) The death of Christ was necessary for the pardon of sin. (5) He visits with afflictions the sins even of those who have been judicially reconciled to His government and adopted into His family, through the mediation of His Son.

III. The magnitude of sin may be argued from a consideration of the dignity of Him against whom it is committed. Sin offers insult and injury to all the attributes and perfections of the Deity. (1) It denies and violates the rights of His sovereignty as the Creator. (2) It insults His goodness. (3) It insults His power. (4) It insults His wisdom, His truth, and His holiness.

W. ANDERSON, *Discourses*, p. 223.

THERE are different ways in which men make a mock at sin. They may mock at sin in others, or they may mock at sin in themselves.

I. A man sees another doing what he knows to be wrong, and he makes a jest of it. He is finding amusement in that which might make angels weep, and which cost the Son of God His life. No one can thus make a mock at sin without thinking very lightly of the evil of sin. The heart grows hard and callous. And the next thing is to commit the sin which we have laughed at in others.

II. Another way of "mocking at sin" consists in making light of it in ourselves. It is very fearful to think how soon we come to this pass, notwithstanding all our better purposes, and all warnings to the contrary. How many men can look back upon a time when sins that they have since committed greedily seemed almost impossible to them. They forgot the guide of their

youth, they kept not the covenant of their God. They shut their ears to God's word, and their eyes to His judgments; they walked greedily in the way of ungodliness, they were "fools who made a mock at sin."

III. Observe what a verdict Solomon pronounces on persons who make a mock at sin; he calls them "fools." None but fools could be guilty of such amazing stupidity. Consider: (1) what sin is in its nature. It is the will of the creature set against the will of the Creator. (2) Consider the consequences of sin. See what an abomination sin is in God's sight by the visible punishment which He has attached to it. (3) Look at the eternal consequences of sin. Shall we make a mock at that against which the wrath of Almighty God is so fearfully declared? (4) If we would truly see what sin is, we must see it in the light of redemption. Who can measure the guilt and the power of that sin from which we could only be redeemed by the sacrifice of the Son of God? See your folly in the light of your Redeemer's tears, your Redeemer's anguish, your Redeemer's Cross; and confess as you look on His marvellous sacrifice that "fools" only can "make a mock at sin."

J. J. S. PEROWNE, *Sermons*, p. 31.

REFERENCES: xiv. 9.—C. Wordsworth, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 157. xiv. 10.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 375.

Chap. xiv., ver. 12.—"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

I. THERE are ways that lead to death. Each of us has come into contact with beings whom excesses have led to a premature end; others still occupy a place in the world, but their ruined health, their weakened faculties, show that, to use the words of St. Paul, "they are dead while living." The death in question here is the state of a soul condemned by Him who sees the most hidden recesses of our being, and whose judgment none can alter; it is the condition of a creature who has willingly separated itself from God.

II. Many a way that leads to perdition may seem to us to be right. Nothing is better calculated to disturb the superficial optimism in which so many of our fellow-men find a delusive security than the firm conviction of this fact. In their opinion, that a man may be saved, he must be sincere; in other words, the way he follows must seem to him to be right. (1) In the order of things temporal it is evident that sincerity in ignorance or error has never saved anyone from the often terrible

consequences which such ignorance or error may entail. Societies are based upon this maxim: "No one is supposed to be ignorant of the law." Moreover, this axiom is graven in nature itself. Nature strikes those who violate its laws, and never takes into consideration their state of ignorance or good faith. (2) God is not an inexorable *fatum*. God takes into account the inward condition of each being, his ignorance, his involuntary errors. Therefore, if any should ask whether a man who is mistaken shall be saved or not if he is absolutely sincere, we shall answer that we are inclined to believe it; and that a way cannot lead to eternal death the man who has entered upon it believing it to be right and true. But this conclusion should reassure no one, for the point in question is precisely to discover if we are indeed absolutely sincere in the choice we make; now, the more I study men, the more I study myself, the more clearly do I perceive that nothing is more uncommon than this sincerity of which we speak so much, and of which so many people make a merit. None are entitled to say, "This way seems right to me, therefore I can enter upon it without fear." We must first of all examine whether we do not call right that which is simply pleasing to us, that which attracts us and flatters our secret instincts.

III. In every human life there are solemn hours when divergent paths open before us. On the choice we then make depends our entire future. When we find ourselves before an opening path, we must stop, measure it at a glance, and never enter it unless we may do so with the peace of a conscience that feels it is accomplishing the will of God.

E. Bersier, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 399.

Among the indications that we are not what we once were, there is, perhaps, none more decisive in its testimony than the depravation of the natural conscience. It is in consequence of this paralysis of the conscience that such an assertion as that in the text points to a phenomenon of constant occurrence among men.

I. The text does not say these apparently right ways are themselves the ways of death, but that they end in the ways of death.

II. The "ways" are mainly of two kinds—errors in practice and errors in doctrine; the former by far the most abundant, but the latter by no means so rare as to bear passing over in considering the subject. (1) The first practical error is that

of a life not led under the direct influence of religion. I speak of the man who, however many virtues he may possess, however upright he may be in the duties of life, however carefully he may attend to the outward duties of religion, does not receive it into his heart nor act on its considerations as a motive. This is a way of life which usually seems right unto a man. He wins esteem from without, and has no accusing conscience within. But he is not a religious man. He has not the fear of God before his eyes. This approved way must end in the way of death. Improbable as it may seem that the correct liver, the blameless and upright man, should perish at last, it is but a necessary consequence from his having put by and rejected the only remedy which God has provided for the universal taint of our nature, by which taint, if not purged out, he must, as well as the rest of the unrenewed and ungodly, be ruined in the end. (2) Take the case of those who, believing from the heart and living in the main as in God's sight, are yet notoriously and confessedly wanting in some important requisite of the Gospel. These ways seem right unto those who are following them. (3) Errors of doctrine. There is nothing in life for which we are so deeply and solemnly accountable, as the formation of our belief. It is the compass which guides our way, which if it vary ever so little from truth, is sure to cause a fatal divergence in the end. Whether we consider practice or belief, each man's deeming is not each man's law; every man's deeming may be wrong, and we can only find that which is right by each one of us believing and serving God, as He has revealed Himself to us in Christ.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 50.

I. THERE is a theory very much in fashion, that if a man acts according to his convictions, he cannot be brought into condemnation. The principle here involved is simply this, that a man's own ideas are his own standard, that he is a law unto himself, that if he does violence to his own views of truth and error, good and evil, he is reprehensible, but that if he be fully convinced in his own mind that is at once a bar to his condemnation. The text offers a strong protest against this theory, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man;" but, notwithstanding his sincerity, notwithstanding his convictions, the end thereof are the ways of death.

II. If we shall be judged not only as to whether we have acted by the guidance of conscience, but also whether our

conscience was a right conscience; there flows from this the doctrine that conscience itself is a thing we are bound to train, and cherish, and educate, in order that it may never mislead us; a man is, in short, responsible for his conscience. It is a mysterious law of our spiritual nature that we have to mould and train our own proper guide. God has given conscience for our direction, but it remains with ourselves to secure that we be directed by it aright.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Sermons in Various Churches*, p. 83.

REFERENCES: xiv. 12.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 378; J. Thain Davidson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 369. xiv. 13-24.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. i., p. 387.

Chap. xiv., ver. 14.—"A good man shall be satisfied from himself."

I. THE good man's satisfaction arises from the circumstance that he is regulated in his character and conduct by a fixed and stable thing, by principle. In contemplating anything to be done, in all his movements, in all moral questions, his object is to do what is right. In the midst of his activity, his satisfaction arises from himself, from the consciousness that he acts upon principle and in the sight of God; and therefore, if he should fail, looking back upon his failure, reflecting upon his error, he has still a satisfaction which the world can neither confer nor destroy.

II. The sentiment may be illustrated by the contrast which is often exhibited between the good man and the wicked, when the latter is called upon to eat the fruit of his own ways. The good man is not only preserved from pain and wretchedness, but is placed in such circumstances, the result of a wise and holy course of conduct, as to be able to help others; and thus he enjoys the highest satisfaction, not of being delivered, but of being a deliverer; enjoys something of the satisfaction of God Himself, who giveth to all and receiveth from none.

III. The satisfaction of the good man arises from his being preserved from the sting and reproach of an evil conscience. He has nothing that he ardently wishes to forget, or nothing that he dare not remember, because he believes that God has forgotten and blotted it out. The darkness and the light are both alike to him. "The good man is satisfied from himself."

IV. The last idea connected with this subject is that of the positive and increasing pleasure, the growing delight of the good man's soul. I refer to that joyous healthiness of soul which

arises from a life of purity, devotion, and goodness; that calm yet irrepressible feeling of delight, which daily and hourly, continually and always, fills the heart. It is not positive reflection upon doing, it is not thinking about character or actions, but the perpetual rising up in the soul of an inexpressible satisfaction. This is the way in which a good man is "satisfied from himself."

T. BINNEY, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1389

HERE, in a short text, are three paradoxes.

I. A good man. As the royal are related to royalty, and the noble to nobility, so are the good to the godly, and they are related to God. Goodness is, therefore, an internal quality; thus the good man is whole within, sound within; you may know a good man by several marks, but they all throw you back on the internalism of his character. Hence his satisfaction; all health is within.

II. Here is a man satisfied. Contentment is the science of thankfulness. It is Christ's fulness that gives the crown of contentment.

III. The source of the satisfaction—from himself. (1) He is satisfied with the object and foundation of his faith. (2) In the evidences of his religion, a good man shall be satisfied from himself. (3) In the ordinances of the sanctuary a good man shall be satisfied from himself. (4) In the law of life a good man is satisfied from himself. (5) In the apportionment and destiny of the world a good man is satisfied from himself.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 400.

REFERENCES: **xiv. 14.**—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1235; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 384; W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 100. **xiv. 15.**—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 388. **xiv. 16.**—*Ibid.*, p. 392.

Chap. xiv., ver. 23.—"In all labour there is profit."

I. IN the text Solomon gives us a lesson which holds good through all matters of life. That it is a short-sighted mistake to avoid taking trouble; for God has so ordered the world that industry will always repay itself. God has set thee thy work, then fulfil it. Fill it full. Throw thy whole heart and soul into it. Do it carefully, accurately, completely. It will be better for thee and for thy children after thee. All neglect, carelessness, slurring over work, is a sin—a sin against God, who has called us to our work; a sin against our country and our neighbours, who ought to profit by our work; and a sin against ourselves

also, for we ought to be made wiser and better men by our work.

II. Work, hard work, is a blessing to the soul and character of the man who works. Being forced to work and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle man will never know. If you wish to see how noble a calling work is, consider God Himself, who although He is perfect does not need, as we do, the training which comes by work, yet works for ever with and through His Son, Jesus Christ, who said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God works, because, though He needs nothing, all things need Him. You are called to copy God, each in his station, and to be fellow-workers with God for the good of each other and yourselves; called to work because you are made in God's image, and redeemed to be the children of God.

C. KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 269.

REFERENCES: xiv. 24.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 252. xiv. 25.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 396. xiv. 25-31.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 1.

Chap. xiv., ver. 26.—"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence."

I. REAL godliness involves confidence towards God. The reason is that reconciliation with God is complete. In the case of those who really fear the Lord there springs up between them and God a filial friendship.

II. Real godliness produces confidence towards men.

III. The confidence which real godliness awakens is adapted to all circumstances. In danger it becomes boldness; in duty and work it is conscious power.

IV. It is a confidence which abides to the end.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 11.

REFERENCES: xiv. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1,290; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 44; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 401. xiv. 30.—*Ibid.*, p. 406.

Chap. xiv., ver. 31.—"He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor."

I. NOTICE some suggestions as to the practice of mercy to the poor. We must not confine our aim either to the sins of the soul on the one hand, or to the sufferings of the body on the other.

II. Every one must do his part in the great work of helping those who cannot help themselves.

III. Mercy to the poor must be a law operating from within, and not a system adopted from without.

IV. There must be regulating wisdom as well as motive power.

V. Whatever share you may be able to take in the wholesale benevolence of organised societies, you should also carry on a retail business by personal contact with the sufferers.

W. ARNOT, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 410.

REFERENCES: xiv. 32.—J. Owen, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 49; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 417; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 198; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 179. xiv. 32-35.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 11. xiv. 34.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 262; Bishop Temple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 49.

Chap. xv., ver. 1.—"A soft answer turneth away wrath."

I. IT is a very hard thing to live through a month without being unkind or angry. Calm and sweet tempers are rare; and perhaps we may say, without disparaging their value or their beauty, that it is not to these to which we naturally look for the most conspicuous services in the cause of God. Their province is to heal, to calm, to sweeten life; but perhaps it is from more fiery—yes, and more turbulent natures, that we must expect the initiative in works of good.

II. "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Some provocation is presupposed; some one has, or fancies he has, a grievance. Such grievances must arise in our common life. In this sense, "it must be that offences come." What an opening there is here for our putting in practice Solomon's wise and truly Christian proverb: "A soft answer turneth away wrath"!

III. If there be such happiness in a soft answer, how is it that it is so hard to give it? There is one great obstacle to which all others may be reduced—the obstacle of pride. When harsh words are addressed to us which we feel to be unmerited, we cannot bring ourselves to forego the delight of a successful retort, still less can we bear to admit that any part of the wrong is of our doing. Pride disguises itself very cunningly, so that even a high-minded Christian is misled by its craft.

IV. Remember the blessing pronounced on the peacemakers. No man ever repented the endeavour to rekindle "quietness, peace, and love" among friends who ought never to have been parted. H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 163.

REFERENCES: xv. 1.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 1st series, p. 424. xv. 1-6.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 20.

xv. 3, 11.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 9. xv. 4.—W. Gladden. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 132. xv. 6.—T. Wallace, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 174; H. J. Wilmot Buxton, *Literary Churchman Sermons*, p. 153. xv. 7-12.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 29. xv. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 177. xv. 13.—W Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 30. xv. 13-20.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 40. xv. 14. 31.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 37. xv. 16, 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 152. xv. 19.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 172.

Chap. xv., ver. 20.—"A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish man despiseth his mother."

I. Consider in what this wisdom consists. Wisdom in the Proverbs does not mean simply intellectual greatness, or intellectual acquirements; a man may be very learned and clever, yet be quite destitute of that excellent wisdom of which Solomon speaks. Wisdom means goodness; it means striving to discover what is God's will as regards the conduct of our lives, and acting upon it when discovered. It means keeping God's commandments and loving and fearing Him, and doing unto all men as we would they should do unto us.

II. Consider how a wise son will treat his parents. (1) A wise son honours and respects his parents no less in their absence than in their presence. For him their wish is law, whether they know at the time, whether they will ever know, that he is fulfilling it or not. (2) The honour and respect which we owe our parents will be shown, not only in our acts, but in our words, when we speak or write to them, and our very looks when we are with them. He that refuses a proper reverence to age, though he may fancy he is asserting his superiority, is only proving in reality his own littleness. (3) A wise son is not content with honouring his parents, he also loves them very dearly, and does his best in absence to keep up that warmth of affection which was realised when he was with them.

III. These things are an allegory. Our earthly relations are but a figure of our heavenly relations. The tenderness, the loving care, the joyful self-sacrifice of our earthly parents, are meant to assure us of, and to aid us in believing in, the exceeding great love of our heavenly Father towards us.

E. H. Bradby, *Sermons at Haileybury*, p. 265.

Chap. xv., ver. 23.—"A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"

I. It is of importance to take notice of that habit which is opposed to the duty for which the text contends; I mean the habit of reserve. It would be a grievous mistake to suppose

that this habit is wholly a bad one. But the important point to notice is, that the reaction against the counterfeit of devotion is likely to rob us of what was intended by God to be a true aid to devotion. How often have we seen persons of the greatest ability, and the purest hearts, who yet *dared* not produce what was in them, because they saw other persons to be insincerely and offensively doing the same. This reserve is incomparably superior to a frivolous superficial interchange of religious experiences; but it is far inferior to Christian simplicity. It does not represent the spirit of Paul or John, or of great reformers, or of the most heroic characters. It certainly does not represent the mind of Christ.

II. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (1) There is the word of warning; (2) the word of encouragement; (3) the word of sympathy; (4) the word of congratulation; (5) the word of explanation and apology. To be in any sense "a son of consolation," to be able to make life a little sweeter for others, good a little easier, evil a little more hated and despised, this would be a high privilege for the oldest as well as the youngest among us. Words can do much in this Christian work. Think of the blessing involved in these words of Isaiah, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." If God has not given to each of us the tongue of the learned, He has given to each, if we will but use it, the tongue of truth, of kindness, of purity, of sympathy. There are many, who are "weary" of other sounds, who would gladly listen to sounds like these.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 217.

REFERENCES: **xv. 23.**—H. J. Wilmot Buxton, *The Children's Bread*, pp. 49, 56. **xv. 33.**—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 10; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 45; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 96. **xvi. 1-3.**—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 65.

Chap. xvi., ver. 2.—**"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits."**

WHETHER it be from the condition in which man is placed in this world, closely surrounded on all sides by what is visible and tangible, or because our understandings have been darkened in consequence of the fall, it is certain that we experience the greatest difficulty in forming any notion of things spiritual. The finite intellect sinks exhausted by the vain endeavour to picture to itself the infinite. Who can "by searching find out God"?

I. Now the natural consequence of this aversion and incapacity of our nature for spiritual ideas is a strong tendency to materialism in religion. And as the spirituality of the Divine nature is the truth most difficult for us to conceive, so it is the one most liable to be lost sight of, or corrupted. We are always prone to form gross and material conceptions of God, to think of Him as "altogether such an one as ourselves." The practical results of this principle are always the same; a low and carnal morality always follows, like a dark shadow, a low and carnal creed.

II. There is a class of errors resulting from this principle, against which we have all need to be on our guard—I mean false views of the nature of God's law and of the principle upon which His sentence is awarded. The true answer to all such errors, and the only solution of the difficulty which has caused them, lies in the statement of the truth that the controversy between God and man is about spiritual things, and that our position respecting Him is to be decided by the aspect which our spirits may wear in His eyes, or, as our text expresses it, that "the Lord weigheth the spirits."

III. What is the sin of which a spirit can be guilty against God? Clearly, it cannot be any of these gross transgressions of the letter of the law, which are commonly called sins. To commit these it must be joined to a body. It must be a sin in that faculty which is exclusively spiritual; that is, in the will. The rebellion of the will, in any spirit, is strictly and properly sin; and the banishment from God's presence which is the necessary consequence is eternal death. The law of God denounces eternal death as the punishment for all sins, not because they are all alike in moral guilt, but because they are all alike indications of the same condition of the sinner—one of enmity to God. The very lightest transgression proves, as clearly as the very greatest, the innate lawlessness of the perverted and therefore sinful will.

IV. It is true that you have to pass a spiritual ordeal, searching and terrible as the consuming fire of a sevenfold-heated furnace. But you may pass through it unscathed if in the midst of it the Son of man be your companion.

BISHOP MAGEE, *Sermons at St. Saviour's, Bath*, p. 183.

REFERENCES: xvi. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 849, and *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 175. xvi. 2, 3, 18, 19.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 82; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 59. xvi. 3.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*,

vol. ii., p. 310. xvi. 4.—H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 493. xvi. 5-18.—*New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 10.

Chap. xvi., ver. 6.—"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil."

VALUE of almsgiving in the sight of God.

I. God knits together in the utmost closeness our own deeds, done by His grace, with His own deeds for us. When our Lord Himself says in plain words, "Give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you," He does not unsay what He had said of faith and repentance, but He teaches the value of charity the more emphatically, in that He speaks of it alone. He so loves the poor who endure patiently His own earthly lot of privation; He so loves the love which considers Himself in them, that He refuses no grace to their intercession which shall be needful to our salvation. He, in them, receives our gifts; He, for them, will receive ourselves.

II. What is that mercy which, if we have not, we "shall have judgment without mercy"? Those who have distinguished most carefully have laid down that what, in a large construction, we *need*, is alone ours, "our superfluities are the necessaries of the poor." God's commandment abides. He has not left almsgiving free to our choice, that we should plume ourselves upon our trifling charities, as though they were the free gifts of our liberality. The freedom of the Gospel is freedom from sin, not from duty; it is a free service that we may serve freely. He lays down no measure for us, that giving, as did the early Christians, "to their power, yea and beyond their power," we might imitate in some measure the measureless love of our God for us. But the law of mercy itself is as absolute a law as any of the commandments given on Mount Sinai. It is the soul of all the commandments of the second table. The more God has revealed of His love, the more awful are the penalties of unlove. He has fenced the law of love with the penalty of the everlasting loss of the sight of God, who is love. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

III. Our modern refinement will not bear the sight of Lazarus, nor allow him to lie at the gate of the rich, to elicit the mercy of the merciful, or to receive the charity of our dogs. We proscribe mendicity, we cannot proscribe misery. The law can make it a crime to ask alms in the name of Jesus. It cannot do away with the presence of Jesus. The deepest misery is the

most retiring. To suffer, like our Lord, overlooked, despised, neglected of men, but precious in His sight, is most like to the earthly lot of the Redeemer of us all.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons before the University of Oxford*, p. 359.

I. SOLOMON was speaking in the spirit of the Old Testament; yet you perceive in his words no sense of a contradiction between the two qualities of mercy and truth, no endeavour to show how they may be adjusted to each other. He assumes that they must work together, that one cannot exist without the other. He says simply, "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged;" both are equally enemies of iniquity; both are equally interested in its extirpation; both are equally interested in the delivery of the creature who is tormented by it. Such a view as this was surely the only one which could satisfy the Jews who believed in the God of Abraham. They felt that only a perfectly righteous being could be perfectly merciful. To be unmerciful, hard-hearted, selfish, was a part—a chief part—of their own unrighteousness and falsehood. Why, but because they had departed from that blessed Image after which they were formed, that Image in which mercy and truth are necessarily and eternally united?

II. I have spoken of the old dispensation. Is all changed, as we are sometimes told, in the new? Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Did any one see in Him that warfare of truth with mercy which we have so rashly dreamed of in the eternal mind? A warfare there was throughout His life upon earth—with foes seen and unseen, with Scribes and Pharisees, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places. But it was the warfare of truth and mercy against untruth and hardness of heart. He showed that mercy and truth were divided only by the evil that seeks to destroy both. He showed that it is by their perfect union that iniquity is purged.

III. And by the fear of this great and holy name do men depart from evil. The fear of One in whom dwells all mercy and truth; to be separated from whom is to be separated from mercy and truth; from whom comes restoration as well as life; who seeks to deliver us from the misery that is in us, that we may possess the treasures which are in Him,—this fear, when it is entertained in the heart, when it penetrates the whole man, will keep us from every evil way.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 215.

REFERENCES: xvi. 6.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series,

p. 68. xvi. 7.—J. Wells, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 459. xvi. 9.—*New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 19; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 74.

Chap. xvi., ver. 16.—"How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!"

I. BETTER than gold! But gold is good, very good, and he who would put forward with success the far higher worth of wisdom had better not begin his argument by putting too low an estimate on gold. Gold is full of service; has in it wondrous potencies for smoothing life-travel, lightening burdens, cheering the poor, helping the needy, and glorifying God. Yet before all its power and glitter and glory I stand up and say, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!"

II. Both Solomon and Paul call Christ the Saviour by the name of Wisdom. Solomon also calls the Scriptures wisdom, and they who make piety their chief concern he calls wise. To know Christ, then, in the heart as a Saviour, in the mind as a Teacher, in the life as a Pattern, and in all things as a King—this is wisdom. It is the fear of the Lord, the love of His law, faith in His Cross, the power of His Spirit, the hope in His Word. This is better than gold.

III. Gold can be but an external possession, a mere accessory of life. Wisdom is a well, a fountain, *in* the Christian's soul. It is fed by secret channels direct from the river of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The joy of the Lord is his strength, the strength of the Lord is his joy; and, filled from that perennial Fount of good, he lives, thrives, rejoices, utterly independent of the lack of gold.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 16.

REFERENCES: xvi. 16.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 88. xvi. 17.—*Ibid.*, p. 93.

Chap. xvi., ver. 18.—"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

THERE is a tendency in knowledge to produce humility: so that the more a man knows the more likely he is to think little of himself.

I. Pride proves deficiency of knowledge—first, in respect of our state by nature. Who could be proud of beauty, if fraught with the consciousness that all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass? Who could be proud because of some little elevation above his fellow-men, who is deeply aware of his own position as an accountable creature, the subject and servant of an invisible King, in whose eyes all men are

on a level? Who, once more, could be proud of his intellectual strength, of his wit, his wisdom, his elocution, who knew the height from which he had fallen; who saw in himself the fragments of what God designed and created him to be? It is ignorance, and ignorance alone, which allows of man's being proud.

II. Pride shows deficiency of knowledge in respect of our state by grace. Nothing could be clearer from Scripture than that we owe our deliverance exclusively to the free unmerited goodness of God; and if to this argument for humility, which is interwoven with the whole texture of the Gospel, you add the constant denunciation of that Gospel against pride, its solemn demand of holiness as essential to all who would "inherit the kingdom of heaven," you will see that the further a man goes in acquaintance with the Gospel, the more motive will he have for abasing himself before God, and shunning with all abhorrence a haughty and self-sufficient spirit.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2421.

REFERENCES: xvi. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 392; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 126. xvi. 22.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 99.

Chap. xvi., ver. 25.—"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

OUR difficulty in life is often with things that *seem* to be right.

I. Does not the way of self-protection seem to be right? To a certain extent it is right; pressed unduly it becomes practical atheism.

II. Does not the way of physical persecution for truth's sake seem to be right?

III. Does not the way of self-enjoyment seem right?

IV. Does not the way of judging by appearances seem right?

V. Does not the way of self-redemption seem right? This is the fatal error of mankind.

Application: (1) Lean not to thine own understanding. (2) Seek higher than *human* counsel. Put thy whole life into the keeping of God.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 187.

REFERENCES: xvi. 31.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 156. xvi. 32.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 71. xvi. 33.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 354; F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 141. xvii. 1-7.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 121. xvii. 8-15.—*Ibid.*, p. 133. xvii. 12.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 104. xvii. 16.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 11.

Chap. xvii., ver. 15.—"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord."

THESE words may serve to show us that our estimate of other men is a matter of very solemn responsibility in God's sight.

I. I will first insist on the general duty of conscientiousness in forming all our estimates of other men. We Christians are not driving on with the world, trampling down or lifting up other men as suits our purpose. We have a higher, a nobler work to do by others, even to uplift that standard of right and wrong of praise and blame, which reflects the purity and holiness of Him whom we serve. It should be our aim not to follow public opinion in such estimates, but to act for ourselves and for God.

II. "He that *justifieth the wicked* is an abomination to the Lord." Unholy and unprincipled life, wherever found, ought to be protested against by the servants of God. Here is their line of demarcation, and surely it is plain enough. Yet do we not constantly see it overstepped? Is it not constantly found that men, who would make a brother an offender for a word, whatever might be his usefulness and high Christian example, will at the same time condone the grossest moral faults, and even make idols of men who are the avowed enemies of Him whom they serve?

III. "He that condemneth the just." Here undoubtedly our fault is much more common, much more recklessly committed. We are always more prone to condemn than to justify. It is an abuse of our instinct of self-preservation to be ever ready with our hostility to other men. Notice a few ways in which we may, with God's help, guard against this prevailing tendency of our day. (1) Look ever at the life, which is palpable, rather than at the motive of the creed, which is usually mere matter of surmise. (2) Avoid, and refuse to use, and protest against the use of, all party names. (3) Form your opinions of others, not at the prompting of the world, but as under the eye of God.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 67.

REFERENCES: xvii. 16-20.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 147. xvii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 899; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 116; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 240. xvii. 21-28.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 158.

Chap. xvii., ver. 20.—"He that hath a froward heart findeth no good; and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief."

Two bad things are reproved in these words: the first is a bad

spirit, and the second is a bad habit; the first is the sullen, snarling spirit of discontent, which kills all hearty, genial gaiety; the second is the vicious habit of unbridled flippant talk, which goes far to destroy all cheerful, loving fellowship.

I. Of all the faults of our time, none is more glaring than this frowardness of heart which Solomon denounces in our text. We are all critics, and all fancy we have a right to have an opinion on all things. The vice of the age is a spirit of detraction. Such a spirit, says Solomon, *findeth no good.*

II. The captious man is never the loving one, and the unloving man can never be like Christ. He came among us not to excite us to a restless watching for evil, but to remind us that there was redemption promised from the evil, and to work out that redemption for us.

III. Remember that, the more stupid and dull we are, the more difficulties do we find; and the more we depart from virtue, the keener is our scent for vice. The man that is always looking out for what is wrong will gradually lose his interest in that which is perfect, till all that is simply pure and gentle and true and lovely will appear to him tame and insipid. The froward heart, which is always on the watch for faults and failure, goes on to require these things as its very daily food, and at last waxes frantic when there is no fault to find.

A. JESSOPP, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 210.

Chap. xvii., ver. 22.—"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."

I. CONSIDER the power which the mind can exert in support of the body, so long as itself is in good case. If it be true that the spirit of man has a medicinal power, that there is a strength in his nature which endows him with such control over the body that he can give it up to the worst tortures, and yet betray no fear, then it must be quite idle to argue that he possesses no power by which to keep passions in check, and to make a bold stand against the cravings of unrighteousness. We want no better argument by which to prove to man that there is a strength in his nature for offering resistance to evil, a strength for which he shall give account at the judgment, than that which we fetch from the fact that there is a strength for sustaining infirmity.

II. Consider how, if the mind itself be disordered, it will break down the body—"A broken spirit drieth the bones." We take the statement of Solomon to be that, though there is

a strength in man through which he can bear up against physical pressure, there is comparatively none for the sustaining of mental. We will admit that under certain limitations men may endure mental pain as well as bodily. It is a fine argument for the immortality of the soul, for the certainty of her soaring above the wreck of matter, that, however she be assailed by pain, so long as the pain is unconnected with her everlasting destinies, she never fails, so to speak, as to pass beyond the hope of recovery. We believe that a truly broken spirit is that which is bruised with a sense of sin, and if this be a broken spirit, how true that "a broken spirit drieth the bones." Yet though a man may have been forced to say with Job, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me," he will have passed speedily on to the beholding Jesus dying, "the just for the unjust," to the viewing in Him the propitiation for sin, and the "Advocate with the Father." H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1896.

REFERENCES: xvii. 22.—S. Cox, *An Expositor's Notebook*, p. 161; H. Melvill, *Voices of the Year*, vol. ii., p. 321. xvii. 26.—J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 219. xviii. 1-8.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 169. xviii. 9-14.—*Ibid.*, p. 180.

Chap. xviii., vers. 10, 11.—"The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit."

WE have here the "strong tower" and the "strong city;' the man lifted up above danger on the battlements of the one, and the man fancying himself to be high above it (and only fancying himself) in the imaginary safety of the other.

I. Consider first the two fortresses. One need only name them side by side to feel the full force of the intended contrast. On the one hand the name of the Lord, with all its depths and glories, with its blaze of lustrous purity and infinitudes of inexhaustible power; and on the other "the rich man's wealth." (1) The name of the Lord, of course, is the biblical expression for the whole character of God, as He has made it known to us, or, in other words, for God Himself, as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to mankind. His name proclaims Him to be self-existent, and, as self-existent, eternal; and as eternal, changeless; and as self-existent, eternal, changeless, infinite in all the qualities by which He makes Himself known. But far

beyond the sweep of that great name, Jehovah, is the knowledge of God's deepest heart and character, which we learn in Him who said, "I have declared Thy name unto My brethren, and will declare it." The name that is the strong tower is the name "My Father!" A Father of infinite tenderness, and wisdom, and power. (2) Look at the other fortress: "The rich man's wealth." Of course we have not to deal here only with wealth in the shape of money, but all external and material goods; the whole mass of the things seen and temporal are gathered together here in this phrase. Men use their imaginations in very strange fashion, and make, or fancy they make, for themselves out of the things of the present life a defence and a strength. Like some poor lunatic, out upon a moor, that fancies himself ensconced in a castle; like some barbarous tribes behind their stockades, or crowding at the back of a little turf wall, fancying themselves perfectly secure and defended,—so do men deal with these outward things that are given them for another purpose altogether; they make of them defences and fortresses. Of all delusions that can beset you in your course, none will work more disastrously than the notion that the *summum bonum*, the shield and the stay of a man, is the abundance of the things that he possesses.

II. Consider next how to get into the true refuge. How does a man make this world his defence? By trusting to it. He that says to the fine gold, "Thou art my confidence," has made it his fortress; and that is how you will make God your fortress—by trusting to Him.

III. We have, lastly, what comes of sheltering in these two refuges. (1) As to the former of them, as one of the old Puritan commentators has it, "The tower is so deep that no pioneer can undermine it, so thick that no cannon can breach it, so high that no ladder can scale it." "The righteous runneth into it and is perched up there." (2) I say little about the other side. The world can do a great deal for us. It can keep the rifle bullets from us. But, ah! when the big siege guns get into position and begin to play; when the great trials that every life must have, sooner or later, come to open fire at us; then the defence that anything in this outer world can give comes rattling about our ears very quickly. It is like the pasteboard helmet, which looked as good as if it had been steel, and did admirably as long as no sword struck it.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 301.

REFERENCES: xviii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 491; J.

Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 118; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 269. xviii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 97; *Evening by Evening*, p. 66. xviii. 15-19.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 191. xviii. 17.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 126. xviii. 20-24.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 202.

Chap. xviii., ver. 21.—"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

I. The tongue is like a steed (James iii. 3): (1) When it speaks too much; (2) when it is boasting; (3) when it is angry.

II. The tongue is like a sword (Psalm lvii. 4): (1) Against the weak and helpless; (2) against sacred things and holy persons.

III. The tongue is like a serpent (Psalm cxl. 3): (1) when it slanders; (2) when it flatters.

IV. The tongue is like fire (James iii. 6). It is like fire when it speaks profane or foul words in the hearing of others; because those who hear them speak them again, and so the evil spreads and spreads.

J. Stalker, *The New Song*, p. 24.

References: xviii. 22.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 131; W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 160.

Chap. xviii., ver. 24.—"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

When Christian people talk of a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, there is commonly one Friend in their mind, the best Friend, the most faithful, and sympathetic, and mighty, our blessed Redeemer. But that thought was quite out of the mind of the man that wrote the verse. The writer was not thinking at all of Christ. All he names here is the fact of experience, that men have sometimes found a friend who was more constant and faithful than a brother.

I. A sorrowful alienation from those once nearest is a sad characteristic of our life as years go on. Most human beings would need a friend nearer than almost any of their blood. A characteristic of advancing years is a growing selfishness; a shrivelling up of all the real interests of life into the narrow compass of one's own personality. The most unselfish and the kindest-hearted will need diligently to counterwork that increasing alienation, which in the latter years tends to estrange us from others, to throw us in upon ourselves, to make us quite

alone. Keep as near as you will, there is still an inevitable space between, a certain distance between you and your best friends in this world. We would all need to have a friend who can keep nearer us, and understand us better, and stand by us more faithfully, and help us more effectually, than any human being.

II. And there is such a friend. If we could vividly believe that Christ is our friend, it is very easy to see how good and great a friend. (1) Think of His power—His power to help and protect, in work, in danger, in temptation. (2) Think of His sympathy—He can feel for us, He can understand us, and all we are feeling and going through. His might to help us is as of one raised like the stars above us; His understanding of us is nearer than that of one who sits by the same fireside. (3) This best Friend will never disappoint us; as those we thought our good friends here sometimes do. (4) This best Friend is always near. (5) This Friend is never estranged. (6) He will never die. There is no shadow of coming parting to hang, unspoken of, but oftentimes silently remembered, over our communion with Him.

A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 169.

Our text speaks of a friendship which is the noblest and most enduring. It compares it with what is usually regarded as one of the most powerful and abiding relations on earth, the love of brethren. There is a friend, it tells us, that sticketh closer than a brother. Who that friend is it says not. It may refer to the fact that even in our common life we meet with friends that are better to us than even our relations; but who can doubt that, whatever its primary reference, it does emphatically describe the character of One who is pre-eminently the Friend of man, the Friend of sinners, and the Friend of saints?

I. The love of this Friend is disinterested. How could it be otherwise? What drew Him to us? Was it primarily to be blessed Himself or to bless others that He came? It was not His own happiness He came to seek when He left the world in which He is and was God over all, blessed for ever—it was ours; His joy was that of seeing others rescued, redeemed, purified, glorified.

II. The friendship of Christ is an intelligent friendship; it is a friendship which is based on knowledge, and a complete knowledge of us. Many of the friendships of this world have no such basis whatever, and it is this which often accounts for

their very brief and unsatisfactory character. Christ knows what is in man. He knows, therefore, the worst of us. There is nothing that can come out to surprise Him and revolt Him. And yet He sticks closer than a brother.

III. The friendship of Christ is marked by its fidelity. He does not love us with a fondness which shrinks from admonition when admonition is needed. If He be unseen, He is still at our side, and by His providence is speaking to us now, as once He spoke in an audible voice. He will not suffer sin in us to go unreproved.

IV. His friendship is marked by its constancy. It is not like the moon with its phases, but like the sun, without variableness or the shadow of a turning. He does not break off from us because we are not all we should be to Him. He sticks to us closer than a brother.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 292.

WHAT our text says is true of human friends,—describes them, and furnishes a reason why we should value them, and do all that is right and proper to retain them. But if it applies to any, it applies to the Lord Jesus. It is most of all true of Him.

I. The text is true of Jesus in respect of His love. He loves you better than a brother does. He is the very embodiment of the love of God, and "God is love."

II. The text is true of Jesus in respect of His kindness. He is kinder to you, does more for you than a brother. Kindness is the outcome of love, the result of love, the expression of love.

III. The text is true of Jesus in respect of His patience. He bears with you more than a brother. If anything could win the hearts of children, it should be the patience and gentleness of Jesus.

IV. The text is true of Jesus in respect of His nearness. He is nearer to you than a brother. In Old Testament times the only one who could be a redeemer was the nearest of kin (Ruth iv.). That was meant to bring out the nearness of Christ's relationship to all who are His.

V. The text is true of Jesus in respect of His steadfastness, His constancy. He never changes, never leaves you. Jesus never gives up any friend.

J. H. WILSON, *The Gospel and its Fruits*, p. 157.

REFERENCES: xviii. 24.—B. W. Noel, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,633; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 120; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 116. xix. 1-3.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs* vol. ii., p. 215.

Chap. xix., ver. 2.—"That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good."

THE evils of ignorance compared with the evils of blindness.

I. To be blind is, first, to be destitute of the pleasure of the enjoyment of light, and to be afflicted with the pain of darkness. What sunlight and the want of it are to the body, such are knowledge and the want of it to the mind.

II. Just as the blind man is insensible to the beauties of colour and form, and has no share in the pleasures which others derive from the sight of the rainbow, for instance, or the starry firmament, or the flowery meadow, or the smiling infant; so is the ignorant man insensible to the beauties of knowledge, and has no share in that refined pleasure which the man of science and cultivated taste enjoys.

III. A blind man can be but partially employed in business; he is liable to be imposed on; he lives in a state of almost continual apprehension, imagining danger at every sound; and when his alarm is just, he knows not how to escape; though he be put in the right way, he stumbles on the stones, or falls into the ditch, or over the precipice, and is destroyed. An *ignorant* man is in danger of all this and much more.

IV. Blindness disqualifies a man for giving counsel and direction to others. "If the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch." So correctly graphic are these words, when applied metaphorically, that it was in relation to the evils of ignorance they were originally used by our Lord. Especially let the pious man reflect how ignorance disqualifies him for pleading the cause of God; let the patriot reflect how it disqualifies him for benefiting his country; let the philanthropist reflect how it disqualifies him for advancing the interests of humanity.

V. The counsel of all wisdom is that we first acquire for ourselves, and that, professing to be benevolent men, we communicate to others that knowledge which is necessary for our own and their well-being for eternity; which will enable us and them to lay up treasure for the heavenly kingdom; that knowledge of God, His Son, that science of salvation, without which all other scholarship and all other science are the emptiest vanity.

W. ANDERSON, *Discourses*, p. 280.

REFERENCES: xix. 2.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1. xix. 3.—W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 85. xix. 4-15.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 228. xix. 11-19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 142.

Chap. xix., ver. 21.—"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

THE text plainly implies a great disconformity—a want of coalescence between the designs of man and God; an estranged spirit of design on the part of man. And the case actually is so in the world. Many of the designs in men's hearts are formed independently of God; many in contrariety to Him.

I. Independently of Him. In what proportion of men's internal devisings may we conjecture that there is any real acknowledgment of God? One in ten? One in twenty? In beginning to entertain the design, there is no question made, Will this be approved by Him? The whole devising and prosecution are in a spirit just as if there were no such thing as providence to aid or defeat.

II. But even this is not the worst: man's heart entertains many devices in contrariety to God. It can cherish "devices" which must sometimes involve a rebellious emotion of displeasure, almost resentment, that there is a Sovereign Lord, whose counsel shall stand.

III. In adverting to these devices we may observe that the counsel of the Lord is sometimes not to prevent the design taking effect in the first instance. He shows that He can let men bring their iniquitous purposes into effect, and then seize that very effect,—reverse its principle of agency and make it produce immense unintended good.

IV. How important is it, that all the designs of the heart should, in principle, be conformed to the spirit of God's unalterable counsel; that in all our projects we should be conscientiously and solicitously aiming at a general conformity to His will. J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 300.

REFERENCES: xix. 21-29.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 254. xix. 22.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 147. xx. 1.—*Ibid.*, p. 152; R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 268. xx. 4.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 164; T. Champness, *Little Foxes*, p. 60; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 224. xx. 5, 6.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 170.

Chap. xx., ver. 9.—"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"

THIS is a Gospel question before the time of the Gospel. All the great conditions of the human mind you find as distinctly in the Old Testament as in the New; all the questions that

sharpen themselves into fierce agonies are in the nature of man, and part of his constitution. The inquiry comes to each of us; if any man can answer the question in the affirmative let him do so.

I. The pure man ought to be lifted above fear; the clean soul ought to have a peculiar, a shadowless joy. Have you that gladness? Then why those nightmares of the soul, why those sudden fears, why those peculiar distresses, why those doubts and scepticisms and questionings, why a thousand indications of unrest and tumult? This ought to suggest that you have not completed the task which you suppose yourself to have accomplished in the heart.

II. There is a tremendous responsibility in returning an affirmative answer to the inquiry of the text. If a man were to say, "Yes, I have made my heart clean and am pure from my sin," he would (1) contradict the whole testimony of Scripture; (2) supersede the work of Christ; (3) withdraw himself from all the cleansing, purifying agencies which constitute the redeeming ministry of the universe. There is no heaven along the line of self-hope; there is no pardon in the direction of self-trust.

PARKER, *Fountain*, August 1st, 1878.

REFERENCES: xx. 9.—H. Hayman, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 50. xx. 10-14.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 338.

Chap. xx., ver. 11.—"Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

I. THE actions of children become, in process of time, their own doings. Children move before they act, and they live as mere animals before they act spiritually and morally. But in process of time the child acts. All its movements become conduct, the result of a determination to behave itself in a particular way. This is what is meant by "his doings."

II. When the actions of children become their doings, the children are recognised as accountable. (1) God recognises the child as the author of its own actions; He sees the doings of the child spring from a motive and principle within. (2) The god of evil knows, by the doings of children, with whom and with what he has to do. (3) The angelic inhabitants of heaven recognise children in their ministrations. (4) Children are recognised as accountable by their fellow human beings.

III. From these facts we draw the following inferences:—(1) If a child be known by his doings, the evils of sin are not escaped by the childhood of the sinner. (2) If a child be

known by his doings, he is, as a child, exerting influence for good or for evil. (3) If a child be known by his doings, all the differences of human character are not traceable to education. (4) If a child be known by his doings, the character of the future man is often indicated by the character of the present child. (5) If a child be known by his doings, God does not treat a generation of children *en masse*, but individually. (6) If a child be known by his doings, one test of character is universally applied by the Judge of all.

S. MARTIN, *Rain Upon the Mown Grass*, p. 460.

REFERENCE: xx. 11.—*New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 115.

Chap. xx., ver. 12.—"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them."

I. How the eye tells the brain of the picture which is drawn upon the back of the eye; how the brain calls up that picture when it likes—these are two mysteries beyond all man's wisdom to explain. These are two proofs of the wisdom and the power of God which ought to sink deeper into our hearts than all signs and wonders; greater proofs of God's power and wisdom than if yon fir-trees burst into flame of themselves, or yon ground opened and a fountain of water sprang out. The commonest things are as wonderful, more wonderful, than the uncommon; and yet people will hanker after the uncommon, as if they belonged to God more immediately than the commonest matters. That is not faith, to see God only in what is strange and rare; but this is faith, to see God in what is most common and simple; to know God's greatness, not so much from disorder as from order; not so much from those strange sights in which God seems (but only seems) to break His laws, as from those common ones in which He fulfils His laws.

II. When a man sees that, there will arise within his soul a clear light, and an awful joy, and an abiding peace, and a sure hope, and a faith as of a little child. Then will that man crave no more for signs and wonders; but all his cry will be to the Lord of order, to make him orderly; to the Lord of law, to make him loyal; to the Lord in whom is nothing arbitrary, to take out of him all that is unreasonable and self-willed; and make him content, like his Master Christ before him, to do the will of his Father in heaven, who has sent him into this noble world. C. KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 224.

REFERENCES: xx. 12.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 175. xx. 14.—W. Baird, *The Hallowing of our Common Life*, p. 13;

T. Binney, *King's Weighhouse Chapel Sermons*, 1st series, p. 384; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 187. xx. 15-21.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 350.

Chap. xx., ver. 17.—"Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."

THERE are instances in which a very little practice in evil will make real wickedness seem to one harmless, to another necessary, to another almost satisfactory. This is what the wise prince meant by saying the bread of deceit was sweet. "Yes, it is," says Solomon—*and afterwards?* How may we be certain of the afterwards of deceit? How may we be certain that it will infinitely outweigh the present sweetness?

I. All things that are done by God's creatures are subject to God's judgment. If God approves of a thing, the things that follow from it are sure to be good and happy things. If He condemns it they are sure to be good in one sense, but they are absolutely sure to be destructive of that which is causing evil, and they would not be good unless they were so destructive and baneful and withering to what is evil.

II. The deceiver is especially a person who, by his own act and deed, resolutely and on purpose appeals from this life to the next. He says, "I will not be judged here. I will not now bear the consequences of what I have done." Who can aid him? How can his best lover and friend protect him? Is it wonderful that Solomon and St. John alike, in speaking of the deceiver, say that his time comes *afterwards?*

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 132.

REFERENCE: xx. 22-30.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 362.

Chap. xx., ver. 27.—"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."

GOD is the fire of this world, its vital principle, a warm pervading presence everywhere. Of this fire the spirit of man is the candle. What does that mean? If, because man is of a nature which corresponds to the nature of God, and just so far as man is obedient to God, the life of God which is spread throughout the universe gathers itself into utterance; and men, aye and all other beings, if such beings there are, capable of watching our humanity, see what God is in gazing at the man whom He has kindled—then, is not the figure plain? It is a wondrous thought, but it is clear enough. Here is the universe, full of the diffused fire of divinity. Men feel it in the air, as they feel

an intense heat which has not broken into a blaze. Now in the midst of this solemn burdened world there stands up a man, pure, God-like, and perfectly obedient to God. In an instant it is as if the heated room had found some sensitive inflammable point where it could kindle to a blaze. The fitfulness of the impression of divinity is steadied into permanence. The fire of the Lord has found the candle of the Lord, and burns clear and steady, guiding and cheering instead of bewildering and frightening us, just so soon as a man who is obedient to God has begun to catch and manifest His nature.

I. Man's utterance of God is purely an utterance of quality. It can tell me nothing of the quantities which make up His perfect life. Whoever has in him the human quality, whoever really has the spirit of man, may be a candle of the Lord. A poor, meagre, starved, bruised life, if only it keeps the true human quality, and does not become inhuman; and if it is obedient to God in its blind, dull, half-conscious way; becomes a light. There is no life so meagre that the greatest and wisest of us can afford to despise it. We cannot know at all at what sudden moment it may flash forth with the life of God.

II. In this truth of ours we have certainly the key to another mystery which sometimes puzzles us. What shall we make of some man rich in attainments and in generous desires, well-educated, well-behaved, who has trained himself to be a light and help to other men, and who, now that his training is complete, stands in the midst of his fellow-men completely dark and helpless? Such men are unlighted candles; they are the spirit of man elaborated, cultivated, finished, to its very finest, but lacking the last touch of God.

III. There is a multitude of men whose lamps are certainly not dark, and yet who certainly are not the candles of the Lord. A nature richly furnished to the very brim, and yet profane, impure, worldly, and scattering scepticism of all good and truth about him wherever he may go. If it be possible for the human candle, instead of being lifted up to heaven and kindled at the pure being of Him who is eternally and absolutely good, to be plunged down into hell, and lighted at the yellow flames that burn out of the dreadful brimstone of the pit, then we can understand the sight of a man, who is rich in every brilliant human quality, cursing the world with the continual exhibition of the devilish instead of the godlike in his life.

IV. There is still another way in which the spirit of man may fail of its completest function as the candle of the Lord. The

lamp may be lighted, and the fire at which it is lighted may be indeed the fire of God, and yet it may not be God alone who shines forth upon the world. Such men cannot get rid of themselves. They are mixed with the God they show. This is the secret of all pious bigotry, of all holy prejudice. It is the candle, putting its own colour into the flame which it has borrowed from the fire of God.

V. Jesus is the true spiritual man who is the candle of the Lord, the light that lighteth every man.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 1.

Chap. xx., ver. 29.—"The glory of young men is their strength."

I. THE glory of young men is their physical strength. In the great battle against the kingdom of darkness we want, not only a consecrated soul, but a strong arm, stout lungs, and vigorous muscle.

II. The glory of young men is their intellectual strength. A man with any nobleness of character will take a legitimate pride in the possession of a sound reason, a calm judgment, a vigorous brain. The Gospel does not enslave the reason, it sets it free. God requires of you that you think for yourselves. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

III. The glory of young men is their moral strength. It is a grand thing for a man to have a delicate moral sensitiveness, and a strong moral determination. By the former he will scent vice afar off; and by the latter he will keep out of the way of the tempter, and resist to the death when he is tempted. The very badge of true manliness is self-control.

IV. The glory of young men is their spiritual strength. I speak now of the strength of religious faith. Only a believer can say, with David, "He strengtheneth me with strength in my soul." Far, far below his true dignity must man remain, until he knows the God that made him.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 3.

REFERENCES: xxi. 1-8.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 379. xxi. 2.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 178. xxi. 9-13.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 390. xxi. 10.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 268. xxii. 1.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 195. xxii. 1-6.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 25.

Chap. xxii., ver. 2.—"The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all."

THE text reminds us that all mankind are alike in their origin,

Moreover, the souls of all alike are equally precious in His sight, who is no respecter of persons; so precious that for all alike He has shed His own blood; and all shall stand before Him at last as equal, to be judged alike. How is it, then, that He allows this strange disparity at present to divide them, placing, as it would seem, both the one class and the other in a situation of great temptation, from the very fact of the one's want and the other's superfluity? All that we can do is reverently to adore these traces of wisdom and goodness which God has allowed to be visible, and such traces are not wanting in this strange phenomenon of rich and poor.

I. The poverty of the poor is a blessing to themselves. (1) They are, by their very situation, under the especial care of the Good Shepherd. (2) Their poverty is a great assistance to them in keeping their hearts humble.

II. The poverty of the poor is a blessing to the rich. (1) They teach the rich sympathy. (2) They are an outward visible sign; established on earth by God Himself to teach the rich the nothingness of all worldly goods.

III. If the poor are to fulfil for us either of these great purposes for which God has ordained that they shall always exist amongst us, we must diligently cherish towards them a kind and friendly spirit.

A. C. Tait, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 142.

I. "The Lord is the Maker of them all." The God who creates light and darkness has created the happy and the wretched; there is no escape from this, if we believe in God at all. He cannot have created the human race and then have left it alone to rush into a social chaos and confusion of itself. There is not a smile on any face, but the light of God is reflected in it; there is not a sigh or a tear but is noted in His book. There is a great mystery in evil and suffering, but not, therefore, a great injustice. Signs enough break through the darkness that encompasses us to prove that God is full of love, and the more we live to Him shall we discern them. If the Divine providence looked only to the present life, then bodily want must be an absolute evil; but since there are two lives—since there is a short life and also an eternal; since there are two parts of human nature, the perishing body and the immortal soul—it is impossible for us to judge of the real character or temper of bodily suffering till we can know how it affects the higher part of us and our everlasting interests.

Meantime, we believe that the hand of God is upon all them for good that seek Him; though He gives grief, yet will He have compassion, according to the multitude of His mercies.

II. Read by the light of the gospel, the text puts on another meaning. The rich and poor are brethren. The feelings and interests which they have in common are far more weighty than those outward circumstances that divide them. In the pages of the New Testament we read a recognition of the rights of the poor. Rich and poor are equal when they stand at the foot of the Redeemer's Cross, craving pardon for their sins; seeking His righteousness to cover their uncleanness. They are equal when they come before God to worship. They are equal when both shall stand before the judgment-seat of the Lord, to give an account of all things done in the body.

ARCHBISHOP THOMSON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,253.

REFERENCES: xxii. 2.—C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 397; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 200; R. Harvey, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 532.

Chap. xxii., ver. 3.—"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."

ONE main element of safety is a just estimate of danger. He who foresees the evil hides himself until it pass; and he who so hides himself escapes the storm which lays lofty rashness low.

I. In the ordinary business of life there are evils which may be foreseen by the prudent, and places of shelter in which he may safely lie. A disciple who has his heart in heaven should beware of fretting because his hands are full all day long with earthly business. Labour, when the Lord appoints it for His people, is a strong wall built round them to keep dangerous enemies out.

II. Evils lie before us in the region of practical morality—evils for which the prudent keep a sharp look-out. A strong tower of defence, from which all the fiery darts of the wicked will harmlessly rebound, is that name of the Lord into which the righteous run. All the power of the world and its god can neither drive a refugee forth from that hiding-place, nor hurt him within it.

III. But the greatest evils lie in the world to come, and only the eye of faith can foresee them. To be caught by death unready and placed before the judgment-seat without a plea, and then cast out for ever, are evils so great that in their

presence all others disappear like stars in the glare of day. But great though they are, the prudent may foresee, and the trustful prevent them. There is a refuge, but its gate opens into time. If the prudent do not enter now, the simple will knock in vain at the closed door when he has passed on into eternity without any part in Christ.

W. ARNOT, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 205.

REFERENCE: xxii. 4.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 64.

Chap. xxii., ver. 6.—"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

IT is well to remember the general truth that all life can be trained. Dead substances cannot be trained. The higher you rise in the scale of life the more wide is the scope and the possibility of training. (2) Children are not only capable of training, but they will be trained in spite of us. And if we do not take them in hand, and with a very definite end in view, which we pursue with inflexible purpose and unflagging constancy—an end not lower than heaven, not narrower than eternity, and not meaner than their salvation—another process will assuredly be going on which will ere long fill us with dismay. We must know that children are always at school, even when they seem to be away from it. What is meant by training up a child in the way he should go? It may be said to consist in four things—true teaching, discipline, example, and prayer.

I. True teaching, or, if you will, the teaching of the truth which concerns it, in its relations to God and man. Store children's minds with truth. Let them know all that it is right to do, both with respect to God and man, that they be not destroyed for lack of knowledge.

II. Example. To tell a child what is to be done is a very valuable thing, but to show how it is done is far more valuable. The precept is then seen to be more than a merely cold and perhaps impracticable injunction. The power of one's example is the power of character.

III. Prayer. You are not left to this work alone. There is none in which you may more certainly calculate on the help of God, if you seek it, than in the endeavour to guide your children in the way that leads to heaven. He Himself is concerned for the welfare of your children. They are His gifts to you, and are meant to be, not curses, but blessings. He may seem for a season to delay His answers, but even while He delays He may

be, in fact, working out the very results you have so earnestly sought. E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 52.

REFERENCES: xxii. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 248; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 2nd series, p. 268; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 209; C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 210.

Chap. xxii., ver. 7.—"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."

CONSIDER the reasons of this alleged superiority, why it should be "more blessed to give than to receive," why "the rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."

I. The first reason is found in the resemblance which is thus acquired to our Redeemer and Creator. Might it not almost be said of the Creator that He gives everything and receives nothing; that He is always the lender and never the borrower? Or, again, if our thoughts be turned on the "one Mediator between God and man," was not the whole of Christ's vicarious obedience one continued course of giving rather than receiving? If it be the very summit of Christian perfection to be conformed to the image of the Redeemer, is there not more of this conformity in giving than receiving?

II. The giver or the lender has necessarily an advantage over the receiver or the borrower, and the having this advantage quite explains how the one is "servant to the other."

III. We find another proof of this position in what we may call the reflex character of benevolence, which causes whatever is bestowed to return to us tenfold. If God hath determined, out of His infinite loving-kindness, that not even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall lose, though it could not claim, a reward, it must necessarily be more blessed to be the lender than the borrower, inasmuch as whatever is bestowed, whether it be time, or counsel, or wealth, or labour, or experience, shall come back to ourselves abundantly multiplied.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,338.

REFERENCES: xxii. 7.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 225. xxii. 7-16.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 40. xxii. 11.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 16. xxii. 17-29.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 53. xxii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,670. xxii. 22, 33.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 244.

Chap. xxii., ver. 28.—"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."

IT cannot but be perplexing in the extreme, to devout and

moderately thoughtful minds, to find how constantly we catch new theories of what we had once felt to be fixed and immutable truth. Men extinguish the fair lights which the Divine hand has kindled, and set up lurid flames and beacons of their own. But as surely as you follow the one, so surely shall you find yourself among the breakers,—the breakers of controversy, doubt, and haply of despair; while, following the other, the voyage shall be prosperous and serene, under the command of the great Pilot who "holds the winds in His fist, and the waters in the hollow of His hand."

I. "Our fathers trusted in Thee and were helped." Apostles, fathers, and old sires, who held fast the form of sound words, have set their sign upon the landmark which they believed to be of God. We are not going to lay down the rule that you and I are bound to believe everything that our fathers believed, or that a man's creed and faith is to be hereditary, and handed down unchanged to his posterity. But, when we recollect the firmness with which the old men clung to the broad doctrines of the gospel, and the strength they gathered, and the rest and peace and joy of soul they drank from them as from a crystal spring, these memories ought to check that mania for fashionable doubting which is so rife amongst us now, and lead us to cherish with some reverence the intimations of the past.

II. We live in a novelty-loving age, and men make novelties in creeds, just as they would make new things in dress. But while, in one grand sense, it is true that when we pass beyond these lower scenes old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, it is also true in another, and perhaps a subtler, sense, that new things shall pass away, and all things shall become old. The novelty of the regenerated life shall be evolved out of the antiquity of the old landmarks. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Forsake not your first love. Take the quiet place of the disciple at the feet of Him who is the Light of the world.

A. MURSELL, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 1.

Chap. xxii., ver. 29 (with Rom. xii., ver. 8, and 1 Sam. ii., ver. 30).—"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings."

I. THE Bible always recognises a basis of character which is found in the natural endowments of a man. The Bible does not glorify men because of beauty and strength, because of great mental parts, powers of reason or imagination; but it

never hesitates to speak of these as parts of the perfectness of life, as conditions and qualities which by proper use and right direction may be turned to the good of men and the glory of God.

II. According to the teaching of the Bible, there must be the diligent use of these natural powers. Simply for man to possess certain capacities and faculties, physical and mental, is not sufficient. He has to discipline and practise, develop and perfect, them. The stigma of folly and the terror of ruin alike are declared against that man who is careless and uncertain, who heeds not the opportunities which are presented to him, and lets the precious moments of life fly by while his powers are undisciplined and his God is unserved.

III. The diligence of life must, according to the Scripture ideal, be accompanied by the virtues and purities of a moral self-restraint.

IV. The ideal man of the Scriptures is to be inspired by a sense of the Divine presence and power.

L. D. Bevan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 168.

References: xxii. 29.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 468. xxiii. 1-3.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 237. xxiii. 1-11.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 70.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 7.—"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

I. This is the Hebrew way of telling us, in a casual word about feasting, that a man's inmost thinking is the true index to his character.

II. Christianity accepts and endorses this inward and broad basis of manhood, and employs its fact and revelation, impulse and inspiration, to secure a thorough regeneration of man's inmost life. Nothing is more absurd than to speak of Christianity as hostile to the most daring and intrepid thought. Hostile to thinking! It lives upon it, thrives by it, compels it, pushes itself into every section of our manifold experience by it, and revolutionises the world by breaking the dull continuity of man's mechanical movements with its spiritual goads to freshness and venture of thought. Its greatest men have been strong, capable, and heroic thinkers.

III. This is a thinking age. The manliest thinking is done with the heart; that is, with the whole of the inner forces of the life.

IV. Modern thinking, ignoring the Biblical rule, is smitten with the blight of cowardice, falls a victim to unreality, and

lacks, notwithstanding its pride, Lutheran courage, holy daring, and self-devotion.

V. We expect too much to be done by mere thinking. Mere thought is analytical, surgical, cuts to pieces. We are analysts where we need a temper of friendly personal trust. Mere thinking never was the key to unlock another human heart. We get nothing from the man in whom we will not confide. The first need for many of us is not more thinking, but immediate obedience to what we know.

VI. No thinking is manly that fails to take adequate account of the force of intense moral enthusiasms. It is provable that only in the white heat of a glowing passion for an ethical goal have we the clearest vision of eternal fact.

VII. The thinking that is of the brain only, and not of the heart, is in serious danger of passing over the unseen order and treating it as though it did not exist.

VIII. Above all things, do not let us be alarmed at any of the mistakes and mischiefs that cause disobedience to the Christian law of manly thinking. We need have no misgiving about the future. Man is essentially a thinker and a unit; and he must think towards unity, and truth, and perfection. "God is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" therefore after every temporary eclipse the Sun of righteousness will break forth and reveal again the way to the Father.

J. CLIFFORD, *The Dawn of Manhood*, p. 66.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 7.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 285. xxiii. 12-23.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 83. xxiii. 15-35.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 256.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 17.—"Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

I. HOLY Scripture is full of warnings against this fatal form of envy, for indeed in this form came the first temptation to our mother Eve. Why did she look towards the fatal tree, and reach out her hand, and touch the fruit, and take it, and taste it but because the tempter had contrived to put it into her weak and foolish heart that by so doing she would become as a god; that is, as an angel, as the tempter himself? Holy Scripture could hardly say more against our envying sinners than that by it came the fall of man, and by it the captivity and ruin of the Jewish people.

II. God's Holy Spirit, thus proclaiming the mischief, in His love proclaims also the remedy. The way not to let one's

"heart envy sinners" is to "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" to keep up a regular, habitual, serious sense that God is here, the great and good God; to turn towards Him instinctively in all temptations, as children in trouble run for shelter to their parents. One who in earnest has this in his mind cannot possibly envy sinners.

III. We are almost sure to begin to wish ourselves like the wicked if we willingly abide in their company. Therefore doth the wise man especially caution us that if we would not be "envious towards evil men," we must not "desire to be with them." Remember the end of these men; then you will leave off envying them, and you will begin to pity them and pray for them. J. KEBLE, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 53.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 19.—"Be wise, and guide thine heart in the way."

IN our course through life, our minds are liable to be placed in certain states of feeling strongly marked, and for the time strongly prevailing, and this by causes, by influences, and circumstances independent of our will. These states of feeling, thus involuntarily produced, should be carefully turned to a profitable account; we should avail ourselves of what there is in them specially adapted to afford improvement.

I. It would surely be a wise application of a pleasurable state of feeling to seek most seriously that some of it may be directed into the channel of gratitude to God. These bright and warm states of feeling should be regarded as cultivators regard the important weeks of the spring; as mariners regard the blowing of favourable winds; as merchants seize a transient and valuable opportunity for gain; as men overlaboured and almost overmatched in warfare regard a strong reinforcement of fresh combatants. The spring and energy of spirit felt in these pleasurable seasons of the heart should be applied to the use of a more spirited performance of the Christian duties in general, but especially to those which are the most congenial, such as the exercises and services most directly expressive of gratitude to God, the study and exertions for promoting the happiness of men.

II. The infelicitous season of the soul—shall it not be turned, by wisely "guiding the heart," to lasting advantage? Now that light thoughts, and brisk spirits, and worldly pleasures and hopes are aloof for a while, take the opportunity for serious consideration.

III. We will apply the admonition to one more state of feeling which not seldom visits an observer of mankind; namely, an indignant excitement of mind against human conduct. This may enforce on you the necessity of a most carefully disciplined judgment. It may surely contribute to aggravate your permanent impression of the extreme evil of sin, and therefore to justify the Almighty in that part of His economy which is directed in hostility against it, to impress upon you that what is so much to be hated is no less to be dreaded.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 28.

REFERENCE: xxiii. 19-23.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 4th series, p. 368

Chap. xxiii., ver. 23.—"Buy the truth, and sell it not."

THE text declares two great truths: first, that truth is a matter of purchase; and, secondly, that there is a possibility of selling it and an inclination to do so.

I. Truth is, of course, in itself, one, perfect, and eternal; but to us it is a growing and increasing treasure. The discovery of truth rolls onward, widening as it rolls. While along its banks far back gathered the eager crowd of inquirers who came to dip their vessels into the passing stream, to each company it appeared broader; it swelled in a more magnificent current; it washed the banks of a deeper channel. We cannot see where the river rushes to the sea; it may be far, it may be near: but we see the shore where we are standing, and we know the truth that we have bought.

II. How shall we who have got truth devote ourselves in any way to its enlargement or retention? (1) One way in which we all of us can continue to purchase truth is by having the eye ever open to its still developing lessons. (2) A more direct means of the acquisition of truth will be reading, meditation, and conversation. (3) The reproof of the wise and good or of those in authority over us will be a third means by which we can purchase truth for ourselves. (4) Prayer to God becomes a constant mode of purchasing truth.

III. There is great danger lest we sell what has been gained by the sufferings of centuries, and cut ourselves off from the blessings which generations of our ancestors have striven to give us. Among other shrines at which we are tempted to sell the truth at this day, there are none more common than those that are raised by the principles of Erastianism, commercialism, and scepticism. We are the executors of a great will, the

testament of the Cross and the day of Pentecost. We are responsible for our administration of it. But more than that, we are the heirs of the property and the inheritance which that will distributes. We all of us stand in two relationships. If we forfeit our claim of having performed the one faithfully, we forfeit the other. If we betray our trust, we forfeit our inheritance, and cancel for ourselves at least the testament of Calvary and the covenants of the bride of Christ.

E. MONRO, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 65.

THE teaching of one who had a right to speak, from the largest experience, perhaps, that any man had, is that truth is hard to get and difficult to retain: "Buy the truth, and sell it not." The force of the metaphor lies in this, that we cannot obtain truth without cost, and that when we have it we shall be bribed to part with it. "Buy it"—then there must be a price; "sell it not"—then there must be a temptation to let it go.

I. What is the cost of truth? (1) You must follow truth wherever it leads you. (2) You must get out of the littlenesses and narrownesses of party feeling. (3) You must feel and act as an infant in intellect, being conscious of weakness and ignorance even in your strongest point. (4) You must fling away the selfishness of an indolent, luxurious, and pleasure-seeking life. (5) You must begin with God, else your brightest truth will be full of shadows, and your best wisdom shall turn out folly.

II. Truth is a precious treasure. But where there is a treasure, there the robbers will come. And they will come very deceptively, not by force, but by artifice. And they will pretend to buy. But the bargain is ruinous, ruinous to the seller. It often takes as much to keep truth as it does to get it. A little worldliness, a little frittering of pleasures, will enervate the very fibre of truth. And if you trifle with truth in one thing, you will loosen it in another thing, till you can scarcely keep it in anything. Christ and the Holy Ghost alone can make truth; and where they live, there is the image of God. And every seeker of truth, whether consciously or not, is striving after a thing no less than the image of God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 12th series, p. 85.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 23.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 181; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 5th series, p. 160; R. Newton, *Bible Warnings*, p. 60.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 26.—"My son, give me thine heart."

I. THE wise man here uses the word "heart" in the fullest

sense. It includes the whole mind, the spirit, and the soul. These are what the Lord claims, and what the wise man here claims in the name of the Lord. Bear in mind that, although this claim is put affectionately and appealingly, it is a claim, and admits of no compromise. God will not be put off with any minor or inferior concession. He says to every child of man, "My son, give Me thine heart."

II. It is a very comprehensive claim, this demand of the heart. The best way to comply with it is to identify God with everything which will bear contact with Him. If you would give God your heart, just think over to yourself the list of all those pursuits in business, study, or pleasure for which you feel you have the strongest taste, and in which you find the most congenial enjoyment. The evil thing which is wrong in itself must be struck out of the list, and your heart given to God. A life thus controlled and regulated would be indeed a blessed and a model life.

III. God demands your heart that He may enlighten, convince, pardon, sanctify, keep, dignify, and save you. We might press the demand on the ground: (1) of right; (2) of reason; (3) of gratitude; (4) of self-interest. Yield your heart to Him humbly, believingly, unreservedly, cheerfully, irrevocably.

A. MURSELL, *Calls to the Cross*, p. 123.

I. CONSIDER the relationship to God which is conveyed in the text: "My son." Can any closer, any more endearing, tie be suggested? Consider what is involved in the term "Father." (1) God is the Author of our being. (2) God not only bestows upon us life, but the means of enjoying it. He provides us with all that we want. (3) In one particular, God's love is shown to us in a way that no analogy can reach. Our earthly parents can only provide the means of our education, our instruction, our start in life. What if these are neglected, misused, and misapplied? Why, henceforth there is little help for us; "the voyage of our life is lost in shallows and in miseries." Our parents try remedies, but it is often too late; they are often in vain, ineffectual to do away with the mischief once wrought. God has provided a better remedy for His children.

II. Consider what God asks us to give: "My son, give Me thine *heart*." This implies that we have a power over our affections. There can be no doubt that the heart influences the will, and in a less degree the understanding. We are called upon to give our hearts to God.

III. Consider what this means. The loyal affection which a son feels towards his earthly parents throws some light upon the concentrated love with which we are called upon to regard Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." We may in our lighter moments, and for purposes of amusement, prefer the society of younger persons; but still there is a fund of deep, undisturbed love for our parents, with which the most enthusiastic friendship will not bear comparison—a love which sometimes slumbers, but never dies; a love the reality of which we cannot endure to be questioned. Such, in its calm repose, in its loyal attachment, and in its undying constancy, is the Christian's love to God.

G. BUTLER, *Sermons in the Chapel of Cheltenham College*, p. 327.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 26.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 184; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 127; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 87; H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 289. xxiii. 29.—J. N. Norton, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 50. xxiii. 29-35.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. ii., p. 303. xxiv. 1-12.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 98. xxiv. 1, 19, 20.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 268.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 10.—"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small."

I. THE special object of all the training and discipline through which we pass in life is the increase of strength.

II. Every life has its day of adversity. It is in the day of adversity that a man's character is tested. Adversity makes or mars a man. A man is either the better or the worse for the trial through which he has passed.

III. Think what it is to faint as a Christian. It is to distrust God. Let us glorify God in loss, in suffering, in waiting.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 363.

REFERENCE: xxiv. 11.—E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 310.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 11, 12.—"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it?"

I. GROUNDLESS excuses can be of no avail as made to God, because, in the first place, He is a Being who considers everything. If God considers, if He be a God who searcheth the spirits, a God by whom actions are weighed, then I instantly learn, if there be vanity in an excuse, it must be detected, and

if there be falsehood, it must be exposed. There is an overwhelming weight of condemnation in the question, "Doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it?"

II. But Solomon is not content with pointing out to the self-apologist that God considers everything: he goes on to remind him that God knows everything. It is the necessary property of the Divine Being that He should be acquainted with whatsoever was, or is, or is to come, so that to suppose Him ignorant or forgetful of the minutest thing is to charge Him with imperfection; and this, in other words, is to deny the Divinity. Throughout the circuits of immensity there cannot be the motion of a will nor the throb of an affection which escapes God's observation. His is that omniscience to which there has never been an addition, from which there has never been an abstraction; His is that prodigious mind to which prophecy is history, and to which history is observation, which embraces everything at once, so that it can be said to foreknow or to recollect only in accommodation to our limited faculties, foreknowledge having to do with our future, recollection with our past, but both equally with the interminable present of Him who can describe Himself as "I am that I am." The question, "Doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it?" is followed with the yet more startling and the yet more overcoming one, "He that keepeth thy soul, doth not He know it?"

III. "Shall He not render to every man according to his works?" Man may be unmoved by our declaration of God as a God who considers and knows; but we have exhausted our resources and are forced to regard him as morally invulnerable if we find him unmoved by the startling interrogation, "and shall not He render to every man according to his works?" H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2658.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 11, 12.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 273. xxiv. 13-22.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 115. xxiv. 16.—F. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 281. xxiv. 17.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, pp. 266, 272, 279, 286. xxiv. 21.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 282. xxiv. 23-34.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 129.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 30-32.—"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof," etc.

I. THE scene shows that if we will not have flowers and fruits, we shall certainly have thorns and nettles.

II. The scene shows that the sluggard and the fool cannot hide the results of their neglect.

III. The scene shows how possible it is to be right in some particulars and to be grievously wrong in others. The legal right of the slothful man to the possession of the field might be undisputed. It is not enough to possess; we must increase.

IV. The scene shows that even the worst abuses may be turned to good account. Keep your eyes open, and you will read moral lessons everywhere. (1) You will see that the finest possessions may be wasted: property, talent, influence, opportunity. (2) You will see that wickedness always moves in the direction of destruction.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. ii., p. 108 (see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 48).

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 30-34.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 401; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 290.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 32.—"Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction."

I. WHEN the learner in God's school goes out to observe mankind, he will think of the manner, and cautions, and rules for turning what he sees to the most beneficial account and of the most instructive points to fix his attention upon. (1) Let not his observing be merely of the nature of speculation, not simply a seeing and judging what men are. (2) Another admonition is against prejudice and arrogance in observing and judging. (3) Another is against taking pleasure in perceiving and ascertaining what is wrong in man. (4) Another grand rule is that our observations on other men should not be directed or suffered to go to the effect of our being better pleased with ourselves, with this exception: that if Divine grace has really wrought a work in us, we may well be delighted with that as such.

II. To such general considerations there might be added a variety of more special observations. (1) Think of the probable difference between our judgments of the persons we look upon and their own judgments of themselves. (2) One of the most conspicuous things to be noticed in looking on mankind is how temptation operates and prevails. (3) A prominent and mournful thing to be seen in looking on mankind will be the great errors, the lapses, of good men. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (4) In looking on men, observe the effect of situation and circumstances. Look

watchfully how men are affected, and who shall dare to say, "I have nothing to fear in a like situation"? (5) Happily there are worthier things here and there: exemplary virtues, graces, wisdom; and it is delightful to turn for instruction to these from the many things that instruct us as being evil. Let these better examples be observed, with attention to understand how they are formed and an earnest effort of imitation.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 29.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 33, 34.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 331. xxv. 1-5.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 296. xxv. 1-7.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 143. xxv. 2.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 187. xxv. 8-13.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 152. xxv. 11.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 4th series, p. 149. xxv. 13, 19.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 303. xxv. 14-20.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 163. xxv. 15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 224.

Chap. xxv., ver. 16.—"Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee," etc.

I. THE Bible does not prohibit pleasure. What the Bible forbids is excess in the use of pleasure, untimely pleasures, and pleasures that arise from sin or that lead to sin.

II. In prohibiting such pleasures, the Bible proceeds upon a principle of benevolence.

III. The principle is benevolent because it accords with the constitution of our nature. There is a point at which pleasure becomes pain. It is the law of our being that if pleasure is to remain pleasure, it must be enjoyed moderately and intermittently.

PARKER, *City Temple* vol i., p. 11.

I. I HOLD that pleasure is a necessity of our nature, that we are made to enjoy, and that the goodness of God, which hath made our complex constitution, our many-sided manhood, so marvellously capable of pleasure, hath made bountiful provision for full satisfaction and delight. In all true physical delights, then, the Christian finds honey; and to him the good God says, "Hast thou found honey? Eat it."

II. But man's physical being is only a portion of his noble and superior constitution. As with the physical, so with the intellectual, the Christian's capability runs on all fours with that of the unbeliever in the direction of any mental honey of pleasure and delight that can be found; and the royalty of mind is at

least as kingly and imperial when it bends before the crowned Christ as when reason binds the lordly symbol round its own presumptuous brow.

III. There is the moral and spiritual man, whose existence cannot be ignored. Nobody will dispute that there is honey in doing right, that there is pleasure in goodness and truth, and that, unless the conscience is utterly dead, there is a bitterness in doing wrong. There is nothing in religion that can deprive us of all the real enjoyment, the true pleasure, the satisfying honey, the rational delights, which are possible to anybody in all God's wide world.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 171.

REFERENCES: xxv. 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 59. xxv. 21, 22.—*New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 35; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 323. xxv. 23.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 41.

Chap. xxv., ver. 25.—"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

I. HEAVEN is the "far country" to us poor children of the earth to-day. (1) It is a far country possibly as measured by distance. (2) It is a far country more especially from the fact that it is far away beyond our comprehension. Even the aid of revelation does but give us dim glimpses of its distant splendours, does but cast a faint aurora glow on the far horizon; and that is for the most part dashed and dimmed by the fogs of time and sense. (3) Heaven is a far country because we are by nature so disqualified from inhabiting it. The distance is measured by the unfitness of the case.

II. From this far country good news has come. (1) We delight to hear from a far country when it contains those who are near and dear to us. In the far country of which I speak, there is not one of us that has not interests of this kind: parents, partners, families, friends, all housed and homed, all settled and thrifty, all dwelling in this far, far country beyond the sea. (2) News from a far country is profoundly interesting and acceptable if it be a country in which we intend to live by-and-bye. You are all intending to emigrate to heaven. Surely, then, news of this far country, brought to you from the far country direct, should be to you as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 127.

REFERENCES: xxv. 25.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 401; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 190; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 14. xxv. 27.—W. H. Jackson, *Christian*

World Pulpit, vol. xxii., p. 179. xxvi. 1-11.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 185. xxvi. 4, 5.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 461. xxvi. 11.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 328. xxvi. 12-28.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 198.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 13.—"The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets."

I. THERE is a lion in the way? In what way? I answer, In the way of life, of every life. Life, if it is to be a true life, is not an easy thing. The men who live for nobler objects than those of shameful selfishness, like St. Paul, will have to fight with wild beasts at Ephesus or elsewhere. Every step of the road requires effort, courage, resolution, watchfulness; it needs the girded loins and the burning lamp; it needs the swift foot, and the sharp sword, and the stout heart, and the strong arm; it needs faith, and prayer, and the battle, and the cross; it needs the will to toil on though the feet bleed, and to fight on though the heart faint, to do all this unto death. That is the way, dim, thorny, and lion-haunted; and all the best and noblest of the earth have trodden it.

II. "There is a lion in the way." Yes, and not one, but many lions: (1) the lion of the world's opposition and hatred; (2) the lion of our own fleshly nature, of our own physical and mental passions; (3) our "adversary the devil."

III. These lions—the world, the flesh, and the devil—for all their seeming strength and ferocity and the passion in their throats, prove but cowardly beasts after all; and though Timorous and Mistrust may not find it out, they are but chained lions, and we stand beyond their spring. But the slothful man not only says, "There is a lion in the way," but adds, "I shall be slain in the streets," and then in a reproachful and injured tone, "You well know that many have been so slain." Yes, it is quite true; they have been so slain: but to them, as to thei Lord, through death and after death, if not in life, have cmoe the glory and the victory.

F. W. FARRAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 17.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 20.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 41. xxvii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 94; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 333; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 8; F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 231. xxvii. 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 468; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 289; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 37. xxvii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1227. xxvii. 10.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 192. xxvii. 15.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 250.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 17.—"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

I. THE character of true friendship. It should be simple, manly, unreserved, not weak, or fond, or extravagant, nor yet exacting more than human nature can fairly give. It should be easy, too, and cheerful, careful of little things, having also a sort of dignity which is based on mutual respect. Perhaps the greatest element of friendship is faithfulness.

II. Like the other goods of life, friendship is commonly mixed and imperfect, and liable to be interrupted by changing circumstances or the tempers of men. The memory of a friendship is, like the memory of the dead, not lightly to be spoken of or aspersed.

III. Christian friendship is another aspect of the ideal, though in some respects different. For the spirit of a man's life may be more or less consciously Christian. That which others regard as the service of man he may recognise to be the service of God; that which others do out of compassion for their fellow-creatures he may also do from the love of Christ. And so of friendship: that also may be more immediately based on religious motives, and may flow out of a religious principle. "They walked together in the house of God;" that is, if I may venture a paraphrase of the words, they served God together in doing good to His creatures. Human friendships constantly require to be purified and raised from earth to heaven.

IV. Some among us have known what it is to lose a friend. Death is a gracious teacher. The thought of a departed friend or child, instead of sinking us in sorrow, may be a guiding light to us, like the thought of Christ to His disciples, bringing many things to our remembrance of which we were ignorant; and if we have hope in God for ourselves, we have hope also for them. We believe that they rest in Him, and that no evil shall touch them. B. JOWETT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 218.

THE particulars in which this similitude lies seem to be the following: (1) sameness of nature, iron with iron; (2) mutual action by the friction of the one piece of iron on the other piece of iron; (3) the result of this application of the two similar substances one to the other—the imparting of a finer polish and a sharper edge. To this is compared the effect of friendly social intercourse: "So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Iron with iron; man with man. Iron with iron; man—in the intercourse, the exchange, and in the mutual friction and

operation of mind upon mind—with man: and the result the improvement of both.

I. God made man a social being. This social principle is one of the great gifts of God, for which we ought to be deeply thankful, and which we ought to improve for the great and benevolent ends for which God imparted it. We are designed to live not as so many separate, isolated individuals, but as those who, bound together by the God who made us by the ties of a common nature, a common human intelligence, a common relation to the common Father of all; are to be interested in, and helpful to, one another in the service of God, and in promoting the well-being of one another, of society, and of the human race.

II. Scripture points out besides this common principle which should unite the human race one particular and individual friendship. The benevolence which is due to all may take, and must take, and so *should* take, in many cases, a particular direction, not lessening our benevolence by the confinement of it, but by giving it a more particular direction, affording opportunity for its being more fully exercised than it can be in the wider sphere.

III. The social, indeed, has its dangers; and these are carefully to be guarded against. Therefore let me add one word: the truly Christian social. God appointed the social for the purpose here stated: for sharpening, not for blunting and dissipating; for the improvement, not for the deterioration, of the mind; for edification, not for destruction.

IV. Let us see from this the importance of well-formed friendship. He whom we admit into our friendship we admit into the formation of our character.

J. DUNCAN, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 211.

THESE words express what one friend should be to another: a whetstone to give keenness to the edge of his energy. And this use of friendship, valuable under all circumstances and in all undertakings that belong to earth, does not lose its value in the service of Christ. In that service, more than in any other, the conviction of a true heart and thorough sympathy close at hand is the greatest help that any man can have. But it is undeniable that friendship is too often made the stepping-stone to the worst falls.

I. God has mercifully hedged round most sins with many barriers. (1) There is, first, the barrier which while it lasts is so very powerful, and when it has once been broken down

can never be set up again: the barrier of ignorance. A friend teaching his friend the way to sin is the most shocking use of friendship that can be imagined; and yet it is not uncommon, not uncommon from mere thoughtlessness—the thoughtlessness of the soul that, having plunged into evil, thinks little of seeing another plunge after him. (2) The second barrier in the way to evil is shame. And if a friend takes away the first, how still more often does he help to take away the second. (3) A third barrier is the affection that we feel for parents, for home, for those natural friends whom God's providence has given us. And this, too, a friend is better able than any one else to break through. A friend can supply us with another affection near at hand to take the place of that distant affection on which we are turning our backs.

II. It is sometimes, but not often, the duty of a true friend openly to find fault with his friend. And when that duty comes, a servant of Christ must not be so cowardly as to flinch from it. But the occasion is very rare. In most cases all that is wanted is to hold to the right, and you will do more towards holding your friend to the right than by all manner of exhortations. Friendship, and sympathy, and cheerful example might help us more than any teaching in the world to grow up soldiers and servants of Christ, and to fight His battle when we were grown up. BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 139.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 17.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 342. xxvii. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1118, and *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 195. xxvii. 21-27.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 244. xxvii. 23.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 242; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 355. xxvii. 24.—*New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 230. xxviii. 1.—Parker, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 285; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 348. xxviii. 1-13.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 255. xxviii. 13.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 353; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 85; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 3rd series, p. 270; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 38.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 14 (with 1 John iv., ver. 18).—"Happy is the man that feareth alway;" "Perfect love casteth out fear."

FEAR has a place in the Gospel; may we but find it. Indeed, it is an old remark that every natural principle of our minds, every true inborn feeling in these hearts of ours—desire, affection, devotion, even anger, even indignation, hatred itself—has an object assigned to it—is not to be crushed and trampled out,

only to be redirected—in that new and latest utterance of God to His creatures which is the Gospel of grace and salvation. So it is, certainly, with fear. The object of fear may be either a thing or a person.

I. We fear a thing which, being possible, is also undesirable or dreadful. We do not fear that which is impossible; we do not fear that which is pleasant or neutral. Our Prayer-book, commenting in the catechism upon the Lord's Prayer, bids us call three things evil, not pain, not sickness, not loss, not bereavement, not even natural death, but just these only: (1) sin and wickedness; (2) our ghostly enemy; (3) everlasting death. These three things then are the proper objects of Gospel fear.

II. The fear of God as a Person, even the dread of God as a Person, is essentially of a high order. To feel that there is One above me, a living Being, to whom I am accountable, if it be but as my Judge, to whom I am something, if it be but as a malefactor and a victim—there is something elevating in the very conception. But this, if it stop here, is the religion of nature, of fallen nature, of the thing made and corrupted crouching beneath the hand of its Maker. This mere dread, though it is a higher thing than indifference, is no part of the Gospel. From this kind of fear the convinced man, if he yields himself to Christ's teaching, will pass on into a higher. Of all love, that is the most beautiful which is the gradual produce of the godliest fear. It springs not out of the forgetfulness, but out of the experience, of what I am and of what God is. It is no sentimental dream, no highly coloured fancy, no one-sided view of God's revelation; it takes in all the truth, and is founded upon a rock.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Last Words at Doncaster*, p. 19.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 14-28.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 272. xxviii. 20-22.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 227.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 26.—"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

I. WE may take these words of the Book of Proverbs as a warning to seek self-knowledge. And, as a first step to self-knowledge, they bid us beware of trusting our own heart, or we shall but see ourselves, in a high moral sense, to be "fools" at last. But it may be asked, Is not the heart God's creation and God's gift? Did He not plant eyes in it and give to it light and discernment to guide our ways? Why must a man

who trusts his own heart be a fool? (1) Because our hearts—that is, we ourselves—are ignorant of ourselves. If we knew ourselves, we should not trust ourselves; we do so because we do not know what we are. (2) Not only is the heart ignorant of itself, but it deceives itself. Ignorance is the danger of unawakened minds, self-deceit of the awakened. (3) Another reason why to trust our own hearts is a note of folly is because they flatter us. Self-flattery imposes upon us with the conceit of our own excellence.

II. If this be so, if we be our own deceivers, what securities shall we take against our own hearts? Out of many we can now take only two. (1) The greatest security against deceiving ourselves by trusting our own hearts is a careful information of conscience. A knowledge of sin in itself would interpret to us the true moral character of our own conduct and all its intricate parts of thought, word, and deed. Another benefit of this early information of conscience is that we should be preserved from the stunning and deadening insensibility which early sins bring upon us. No words too strong can be found to urge on parents and guides of children to begin the information of the conscience as early as the information of the reason. (2) The other security is the only one which remains to those who have never enjoyed the first, and that is to take the judgment of some other person instead of trusting in themselves. We advise others better than ourselves; so would they us again. How little do we lay to heart who he is that would fain stop our ears against all advisers. And the man who takes counsel of nobody is his easy prey.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 92.

REFERENCES: xxix. 15.—*New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 164. xxix. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 359; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 84; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 174. xxix. 1-11.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 285. xxix. 12-18.—*Ibid.*, p. 297. xxix. 15.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 77.

Chap. xxix., ver. 18.—"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

I. IF we did not belong to two worlds—that is, if we had not two very distinct natures—we should of course be utterly insusceptible to the vision of a higher, purer world than this. But because the physical man enshrines an inner man, the world of spirits can just as clearly be demonstrated to us as this world is demonstrated to our senses. Whether the opening up

of communication between our spirit and the spirit-world will be during our earth life remains with God. But it is a fixed law and rule with Him, in order to keep faith alive on the earth, that some in every age shall not taste death until they have seen the glory of God and the forms of the immortals.

II. There ought never to be an age without visions. If there be no open vision, then there is no direct testimony of the existence of God, or of the soul, or of a future life. A materialistic age, an age that sees no vision, but is entirely absorbed by material thoughts and in the pursuit of material good, may be a prosperous, flourishing world-age; but souls are ignored and given over to perish.

III. Reasoning from the conduct and method of God in all ages, we are driven to the conclusion that it is most reasonable to look for visions in our own day. No new age ever did, or ever can, dawn which is not inaugurated, however privately and secretly, by a new communication from God to man. Therefore we may be sure that to certain men and women in our own century the heavens have been as literally opened as they ever were to an Ezekiel, a Paul, or a John. In the age of no faith, Heaven breaks silence, and "the Son of man cometh." Therefore is it that here and there in our valley of dry bones there stands a man who is announcing the new faith with majestic authority and the earnestness of realisation.

J. PULSFORD, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 157.

REFERENCE: xxix. 19-27.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 306.

Chap. xxix., ver. 25.—"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

THIS has been proved to be true: (1) in the profession of Christianity; (2) in protesting against personal and social evils; (3) in attempting service on behalf of Christ; (4) in the proposition of new lines of thought.

The fear of man produces three effects upon the sufferer: (1) loss of self-control; (2) modification of emphasis; (3) deepening of selfishness.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 62.

REFERENCES: xxix. 25.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 198; W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 366. xxx. 1-6.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 318. xxx. 1-9.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 379. xxx. 4.—A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 113. xxx. 7-9.—G.

Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 247. xxx. 7-12.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 333. xxx. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 165. xxx. 13-20.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 345. xxx. 20.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 256. xxx. 21-33.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, p. 354.

Chap. xxx., vers. 24-28.—"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise," etc.

I. "THE ants are a people not strong," etc. (1) This is forecast. The ants know the time of their opportunity, and make the best of it. (2) Every man has a summer. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

II. "The conies are but a feeble folk," etc. The tenant is weak; the habitation is strong. Here is a puny, a very feeble folk, going up towards the great rock house. There is something very pathetic, very beautiful, in that—in weakness seeking the granite, in feebleness hiding itself in some pavilion of rock. There is a Rock provided for all weakness.

III. "The locusts have no king, yet they come forth all of them by bands"—a very beautiful and practical republic. They have no king, but every one of them has a little bit of kingliness in himself. Here I find co-operation. That is how it must be in business, in families, in Churches, in governments, in all great confederacies of life.

IV. "The spider taketh hold with her hands," etc. Does this mean skill? This skill will have its reward. Does it mean patience in working out elaborate and beautiful results? Then here is progress—getting into kings' houses, into high places, into palatial position. "In all labour there is profit."

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 52.

I. You must learn of the ants to take thought about time to come. Youth and childhood are your summer. Now is the best time for laying up food for your souls.

II. You must learn of the conies to have a place of safety to flee to in time of danger. Your souls have many enemies. You need the help of One who can keep you safe. Those boys and girls are wise who put their trust in Jesus Christ, and ask Him to take care of their souls. Jesus is the true Rock for children to flee to.

III. You must learn of the locusts to love one another, to keep together, and help one another.

IV. You must learn of the spider not to give up trying to be good because of a little trouble. Keep on trying not to do what is evil, and trying always to do what is good and pleasing to God.

BISHOP RYLE, *Boys and Girls Playing*, p. 45.

REFERENCES: xxx. 24.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 80. xxx. 26.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 327. xxxi. 1.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 392; E. Paxton Hood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 56. xxxi. 1-9.—R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., p. 367. xxxi. 10-12.—E. H. Bradby, *Sermons at Haileybury*, p. 160. xxxi. 10-31.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 397; R. Wardlaw, *Lectures on Proverbs*, vol. iii., pp. 378, 400. xxxi. 26.—A. Rowland, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 129. xxxi. 30.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 35. xxxi. 30, 31.—W. Arnot, *Laws from Heaven*, 2nd series, p. 407.

ECCLESIASTES.

INTRODUCTORY.

I. THERE is no book in the Bible which has been so variously interpreted as the book of Ecclesiastes. Some have held that it was written by Solomon in his old age, to prove his penitence, others that he wrote it when he was irreligious and sceptical, during his amours and idolatry, and intended it as a justification of his wickedness. According to some the author of Ecclesiastes teaches that pleasure is worthless, and inculcates the practice of asceticism; while according to others he asserts that pleasure is the chief good, and exhorts men systematically to pursue it. It has been regarded as a disquisition on the *summum bonum*, as a manual of advice addressed to aspirants for political fame, as a history of the kings of the house of David, as a pasquinade upon the career of Herod the Great.

II. With regard to the authorship of the book, it used to be attributed to Solomon. There is but a single reason for supposing that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes; namely, that the writer speaks of himself (in i. 1) as the son of David and as king in Jerusalem, and (in ver. 16) as being celebrated for wisdom above those who had preceded him. These expressions manifestly point to King Solomon, but they do not prove that he wrote the book. They are quite compatible with the alternative that the author had merely assumed the name and personality of Solomon. The author of Ecclesiastes has himself helped us to see that he is but assuming the character of Solomon, for he represents him as belonging to the past. (1) He says, "I *was* king over Israel." The past tense would be unmeaning in the mouth of the actual Solomon. (2) He compares himself (i. 16; ii. 7) to *all* that were before him in Jerusalem. This is an expression which the actual Solomon would not have used, since he had had but one predecessor in Jerusalem. (3) The specification of Jerusalem as the seat of royalty implies the division of the kingdom into two, after which there were two royal residences: one in Jerusalem and one in Samaria. (4) He declares (ii. 18)

that his successor, the man who should reign after him, would be an utter stranger; "he might turn out a wise man, or he might just as likely turn out a fool." Solomon would not have spoken thus of his own son. (5) The author of Ecclesiastes does not call himself Solomon, but Koheleth, or, as our version has it, Preacher. The other reputed writings of the actual Solomon bear his name in their opening sentences.

III. There is everything in the book to prove that it was not written by Solomon. (1) The style is poor, quite unworthy of the Solomonic age. Besides, it contains a large number of expressions, chiefly Aramaic, which are never found in Hebrew literature before the time of Malachi. "If Solomon was the author of Ecclesiastes," says Delitzsch, "there is no history of the Hebrew language." (2) Ecclesiastes is saturated, as the Dean of Wells points out, with Greek thought and language. It seems certain that it could not have been written till the schools of Zeno and Epicurus had become prominent and influential; that is, not earlier than 250 B.C. The writer was in all probability a wealthy Jew, who spent his childhood in Palestine and his manhood in Alexandria.

A. W. MOMERIE, *Agnosticism*, p. 161.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 9; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 13.

Chap. i., vers. 1, 2.—"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

THE book of Ecclesiastes is a dramatic biography, in which Solomon not only records, but re-enacts, the successive scenes of his search after happiness, a descriptive memoir, in which he not only recites his past experience, but, in his improvising fervour, becomes his former self once more.

I. It need not then surprise us if we find in these chapters many strange questionings and startling opinions before we arrive at the final conclusion. Intermingled with much that is noble and holy, these "doubtful disquisitions" are not the dialogue of a believer and an infidel, but the soliloquy of a "divided heart," the debate of a truant will with an upbraiding conscience.

II. In the search after happiness, his first resource was knowledge, then merry-making, then the solace of absolute

power. But no sooner did he find his power supreme and unchallenged than he began to be visited with misgivings as to his successor. "Yea, I hated all the labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me."

III. Who is there that apart from God's favour has ever tasted solid joy and satisfaction of spirit? All will be vanity to the heart which is vile, and all will be vexation to the spirit which the peace of God is not possessing.

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture II.

Chap. i., vers. 1 11.

THE search for the *summum bonum*, the quest of the chief good, is the theme of the book of Ecclesiastes. Naturally we look to find this theme, this problem, this "riddle of the painful earth," distinctly stated in the opening verses of the book. It is stated, but not distinctly. For the book is a drama, not an essay or a treatise. Instead of introducing the drama with a brief narrative or a clear statement of the moral problem he is about to discuss, the Preacher opens with the characteristic utterances of the man who, wearied with many futile endeavours, gathers up his remaining strength for a last attempt to discover the chief good of life.

I. It is the old contrast—old as literature, old as man—between the ordered steadfastness of nature and the disorder and brevity of human life. As compared with the calm order and uniformity of nature, man's life is a mere fantasy, passing for ever through a limited and tedious range of forms each of which is as unsubstantial as the fabric of a vision, many of which are as base as they are unreal, and all of which, for ever in a flux, elude the grasp of those who pursue them or disappoint those who hold them in their hands. The burden of all this unintelligible life lies heavily on the Preacher's soul. The miseries and confusions of our lot baffle and oppress his thoughts. Above all, the contrast between nature and man, between its massive and stately permanence and the frailty and brevity of our existence, breeds in him the despairing mood of which we have the keynote in his cry, "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

II. All depends on the heart we turn to nature. It was because his heart was heavy with the memory of many sins, because, too, the lofty Christian hopes were beyond his reach, that the "son of David" grew mournful or bitter as he

looked at the strong ancient heavens and the stable, bountiful earth and thought of the weariness and brevity of human life. This, then, is the mood in which the Preacher commences his quest of the chief good. He is driven to it by the need of finding that in which he can rest. He could not endure to think that those who have "all things put under their feet" should lie at the mercy of accidents from which their realm is exempt; that they should be the mere fools of change, while that abideth unchanged for ever. And therefore he set out to discover the condition in which they might become partakers of the order, and stability, and peace of nature—the condition in which, raised above all tides and storms of change, they might sit calm and serene even though the strong ancient heavens and the solid earth should vanish away.

S. Cox, *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 113.

The allegorical interpretations of Ecclesiastes, of which there have been an enormous number, are all based upon a similar mistake. They all assume that the author ought to have written something else. This kind of criticism, however ingenious, is dishonest and irreverent—dishonest, for it is an attempt to obtain unfairly confirmation for our own opinions; irreverent, for if a book be worth reading at all, it is our business to try and learn the author's views, and not to teach him ours.

I. Koheleth begins his soliloquy with the thought that we are not immortal. "What profit hath a man," he asks, "of all his labour that he taketh under the sun?" The earth is possessed of perpetual youth, and she continually repeats herself; but how different it is with man. Generation after generation passes away, and returneth nevermore. We do not live even in the remembrance of our fellows. "But the earth abideth for ever." This was what angered Koheleth: that man should perish when the world in which he lived was eternal.

II. Apart from immortality, all that he said may be repeated with equal correctness to-day. Whoever takes Koheleth's view of human destiny should participate in Koheleth's despair. What avails it to be a Homer or a Cæsar to-day if to-morrow I am to be nothing but a heap of dust?

A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, p. 176.

References: i. 1-11.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 409; J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 12. i. 2.

—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 20; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 102. i. 2, 3.—H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 162.

Chap. i., vers. 2-11.

I. This passage is the preamble to the book; it ushers us at once into its realms of dreariness. It is as if he said, "It is all a weary go-round. There are no novelties, no wonders, no discoveries. The present only repeats the past; the future will repeat them both." From such vexing thoughts may we not escape by taking refuge in one permanence and one variety to which the royal Preacher does not here advert?—I mean the soul's immortality and the renewed soul's perpetual rejuvenescence, that attribute of mind which makes it the survivor of all changes, and that faculty of regenerate humanity which renders old things new and suffuses with perpetual freshness things the most familiar.

II. If the immortality of material forms is only that which they achieve through the immortality of the human soul, and if the true glorification of matter is its sanctifying influence on regenerate mind, we may learn two lessons from our argument. (1) There is no harm in a vivid susceptibility to those material appearances and influences with which God has replenished the universe. (2) But that susceptibility is good for nothing if it be not sanctifying. There is an idolatry of nature. There are some whose god is the visible creation, and not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture IV.

References: i. 2-11.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 22; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 27; G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 29.

Chap. i., ver. 4.—"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever."

It is the manifest intention of the Divine Spirit, as shown in the sacred writings, that we should be taught to find emblems in the world we are placed in to enforce solemn instruction upon us.

I. The character of permanence in objects we behold may admonish us of the brevity of our mortal life. In a solitary or contemplative state of the mind the permanent objects give the impression as if they rejected and scorned all connection with our transitory existence; as if we were accounted but as shadows passing over them; as if they stood there but to tell us what a short day is allotted to us on earth. They strike the thoughtful

beholder with a character of gloomy and sublime dissociation and estrangement from him.

II. The great general instruction from this is, How little hold, how little absolute occupancy, we have of this world! When all the scene is evidently fixed to remain, we are under the compulsion to go. We have nothing to do with it but as passing from it. Men may strive to cling, to seize a firm possession, to make good their establishment, resolve and vow that the world shall be theirs; but it disowns them, stands aloof: it will stay, but they must go.

III. But should not the final lesson be that the only essential good that can be gained from the world is that which can be carried away from it? Alas that mere sojourners should be mainly intent on obtaining that which they must leave, when their inquisitive glance over the scene should be after any good that may go with them—something that is infixed in the soil, the rocks, or the walls! J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 117.

REFERENCE: i. 4.—J. Hamilton, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 484.

Chap. i., vers. 4-10.—"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose," etc.

I. IT is universally acknowledged that the circle is the archetype of all forms, physically as well as mathematically. It is the most complete figure, the most stable under violence, the most economical of material; its proportions are the most perfect and harmonious: and therefore it admits of the utmost variety consistent with unity of effect. The universe has apparently been framed according to this type. Nature attains her ends not in a series of straight lines, but in a series of circles; not in the most direct, but in the most roundabout, way.

II. Passing from the physical world to the domain of man, we find there also innumerable traces of the law of circularity. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh." Human life is like the wheel which Ezekiel saw in vision. Its aspects and relations, external and internal, are continually changing; one spoke of the wheel is always ascending while another is descending: one part is grating on the ground while another is aloft in the air. Action and reaction is the law of man's life. A season of misfortune is usually followed by a season of success; and when circumstances are most prosperous, a time of reverses is not far off.

III. The first and most prominent doctrine which Christianity teaches is that retrogression is an element of progress. (1) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was its watchword when it first raised its voice amid the deserts and mountains of Judæa. Repentance is the germinal bud of living Christianity. (2) The afflictions and trials that bring the Christian low contribute in the end to raise him to a higher condition of heavenly-mindedness. (3) Death seems to the eye of sense the saddest and most mysterious of all retrogressions. The wheel is broken at the cistern; the circle of life completes itself, and returns to the non-existence from which it sprang. But the day of death is better than the day of birth, because death is a higher and nobler birth. The grave is an underground avenue to heaven, a triumphal arch through which spiritual heroes return from their fight to their reward, made conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them.

H. MACMILLAN, *Bible Teaching in Nature*, p. 312.

REFERENCES: i. 4-11.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 60. i. 6.—F. Schleiermacher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 5. i. 7.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 122; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 302.

Chap. i., vers. 12-14.—"I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem," etc.

I. SOLOMON found no rest in pleasure, riches, power, glory, wisdom itself. He had learnt nothing more, after all, than he might have known, and doubtless did know, when he was a child of seven years old; and that was simply to fear God and keep His commandments, for that was the whole duty of man. But though he did know it, he had lost the power of doing it; and he ended darkly and shamefully—a dotard worshipping idols of wood and stone among his heathen queens. And thus as in David the height of chivalry fell to the deepest baseness, so in Solomon the height of wisdom fell to the deepest folly.

II. Exceeding gifts from God, like Solomon's, are not blessings; they are duties, and very solemn and heavy duties. They do not increase a man's happiness; they only increase his responsibility—the awful account which he must give at last of the talents committed to his charge. They increase, too, his danger. They increase the chance of his having his head turned to pride and pleasure, and falling shamefully, and coming to a miserable end. As with David, so with Solomon. Man is nothing, and

God is all in all. Let us pray for that great, that crowning, grace and virtue of moderation, what St. Paul calls sobriety and a sound mind. Let us long violently after nothing, or wish too eagerly to rise in life, and be sure that what the Apostle says of those who long to be rich is equally true of those who long to be famous or powerful, or in any way to rise over the heads of their fellow-men. They all fall, as the Apostle says, into foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition, and so pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

C. KINGSLEY, *The Water of Life*, p. 175.

Chap. i., vers. 12-18.

I. SOLOMON'S first resource was philosophy. He studied man's position in this world. His appetite for knowledge was omnivorous; and whilst hungering for the harvest, he was thankful for crumbs. The result was satiety with satisfaction, or rather it was the sober certainty of "sorrow." The very pursuit of knowledge is penal. The search after happiness is itself a sore punishment. Unless it include the knowledge of God, there is sorrow in much science; that is, the more a man knows unless he knows the Saviour, the sadder may we expect him to become.

II. It would indeed give melancholy force to the saying, "Much wisdom is much grief," if much wisdom were fatal to the Christian faith, and if he who increased his general knowledge must forfeit his religious hopes. But whilst science is fatal to superstition, it is fortification to a Scriptural faith. The Bible is the bravest of books. Coming from God and conscious of nothing but God's truth, it awaits the progress of knowledge with calm security. It is not light, but darkness, which the Bible deprecates; and if men of piety were also men of science, and if men of science would "search the Scriptures," there would be more faith in the earth, and also more philosophy.

III. In the region of revealed truth, increasing knowledge will not always be increasing conviction unless that knowledge be progressively reduced to practice. If knowledge be merely speculative, in extending it a man may only "increase sorrow," for it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness, and it is to the doers of His Father's will that the Saviour promises an assuring knowledge of His own doctrine.

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture V.

REFERENCES: i. 12-18.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 36; J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 61. i. 12-ii. 11.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 40.

Chap i., ver. 12—chap. ii., ver. 26.

I. As was natural in so wise a man, the Preacher turns first to wisdom. It is the wisdom that is born of wide and varied experience, not of abstract study. He acquaints himself with the facts of human life, with the circumstances, thoughts, feelings, hopes, and aims of all sorts and conditions of men. He will look with his own eyes and learn for himself what their lives are like, how they conceive of the human lot, and what, if any, are the mysteries which sadden and perplex them. This also he finds a heavy and disappointing task. The sense of vanity bred by his contemplation of the steadfast order of nature only grows more profound as he reflects on the numberless and manifold disorders which afflict humanity. Apart from the special wrongs and oppressions of the time, it is inevitable in all times that the thoughtful student of men and manners should become a sadder as he becomes a wiser man. To multiply knowledge, at least of this kind, is to multiply sorrow. We need only go through the world with open, observant eyes in order to learn that "in much wisdom is much sadness."

II. But if we cannot reach the object of our quest in wisdom, we may perchance find it in pleasure. Wisdom failing to satisfy the large desires of his soul, the Preacher turns to mirth. Once more, as he forthwith announces, he is disappointed in the result. He pronounces mirth a brief madness; in itself, like wisdom, a good, it is not the chief good: to make it supreme is to rob it of its natural charm.

III. It is characteristic of the philosophic temper of our author that, after pronouncing wisdom and mirth vanities in which the true good is not to be found, he does not at once proceed to try a new experiment, but pauses to compare these two vanities and to reason out his preference of one over the other. *His* vanity is wisdom. It is because wisdom is a light and enables men to see that he accords it his preference. It is by the light of wisdom that he has learned the vanity of mirth, nay the insufficiency of wisdom itself. Therefore wisdom is better than mirth. Nevertheless it is not best, nor can it remove the dejection of a thoughtful heart. Somewhere there is, there must be, that which is better still.

S. Cox, *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 126.

Chap. i., ver. 12—chap. iii., ver. 22.

KOHELETH now mentions the unusual advantages which he had possessed for enjoying life and making the best of it. His

opportunities could not have been greater, he considers, had he been Solomon himself. He henceforth speaks therefore under the personated character of the wise son of David. He speaks as one who represented the wisdom and prosperity of his age.

I. "I have set myself," he says, "to the task of investigating scientifically the value of all human pursuits." This, he assures us, is no pleasant task. It is a sore travail that God has allotted to the sons of men, which they cannot altogether escape. Koheleth thought and thought till he was forced to the conclusion that all human pursuits were vanity and vexation of spirit, or, according to the literal Hebrew, were but vapour and striving after the wind. There was no solidity, nothing permanent, nothing enduring, about human possessions or achievements. For man was doomed to pass away into nothingness.

II. Having stated his position in these general terms, he now enters into the subject a little more in detail. He reminds himself how at one time he had tried to find his happiness in pleasure and amusement; but pleasure had palled upon him, and appeared good for nothing: and as for amusements, Koheleth thinks that life might, perhaps, be tolerable without them. Having discovered the unsatisfactoriness of pleasure, Koheleth proceeds to inquire if there is anything else that could take its place. What of wisdom? Can that make life a desirable possession? He proceeds to institute a comparison between wisdom and pleasure. Pleasure is but momentary; wisdom may last for a lifetime. Pleasure is but a shadow; wisdom is comparatively substantial and real. The lover of wisdom will follow her till he dies. Ay, there's the rub—till he dies. One event happeneth to them all. What then is the good of wisdom? This, too, is vanity.

III. In the third chapter Koheleth points out how anything like success in life must depend upon our doing the right thing at the right time. Wisdom lies in opportuneness. Inopportuneness is the bane of life. What we have to do is to watch for our opportunity and embrace it.

IV. In iii. 14, Koheleth seems to rise for a moment into a religious mood. But his religion is by no means of an exalted type. Times, seasons, and opportunities, he says, are of Divine appointment; and, like nature's phases, they happen in recurring cycles. God doeth it that men should fear before Him. The existence of so much unrequited wisdom in the world might seem to suggest that there is no higher power. But there is. God will rule the righteous and the wicked, and reward them

according to their works. There is a time for every purpose and for every work, and therefore for the purpose of retribution among the rest.

A. W. MOMERIE, *Agnosticism*, p. 190.

REFERENCES: i. 13.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 14. i. 14.—*Ibid.*, pp. 28, 38; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 339; W. G. Jordan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 136.

Chap. i., ver. 17.—"And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit."

THERE are two ways of arriving at the knowledge of the truth respecting the importance and benefit of holiness and goodness. These two ways are—one the experience of what is good, the other the experience of what is bad. These are the two kinds of moral experience we see in the world. I shall compare the two together, first, as to their own character, and, secondly, with respect to their weight in the way of example to others.

I. As to their own character. It is to be admitted that the moral impression which is gained by a course of sin is often a very acute and deep one. There is nothing in the whole circle of human feeling and conviction deeper and more intense than the insight into the emptiness and vanity of the world which men of the world have sometimes at the close of their career. But what, after all, does this wisdom, which is gained by the experience of an evil life, do for them? The great use of wisdom is to make men act aright. If it come after all action is over, it is useless; it is mere seeing for seeing's sake, and knowing for knowing's sake. Here, then, lies the difference between that knowledge which is got by an evil life and that knowledge which is got by a good one. In both cases there is a strong moral conviction gained; but in the case of moral conviction gained by an evil life the harm has been done: and the conviction comes not to prevent the evil, but only to acquaint you with it. To state briefly the difference between the convictions which the experience of good and the experience of worldly men produce, we may say in a word that it consists in faith. In the conviction which is gained by an evil life there is no faith. The possessor would not trust anything but his own experience, and accordingly his conviction is mere matter of experience when he gets it.

II. As regards the comparison of these two kinds of experience in the way of example to others, I cannot but think that the value of that experience at which men of pleasure and

men of the world arrive at the close of their careers, and which they communicate to others, is very much overrated. However strong and acute it may be in itself, as regards its effect upon others it is feeble, and for this very good reason: that the man's advice is one way, and his acts have been in another. There is one, and only one, appointed way of doing good; and that is by being good.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 170.

REFERENCE: i. 17.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 85.

Chap. i., ver. 18.—"He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

THE declaration of the text may be considered as the expression of a soul that seeks satisfaction in mere earthly knowledge.

I. Mere earthly knowledge is unsatisfactory in its nature. Take as an illustration of this the field of creation. The knowledge of facts and laws can employ man's reason, but it cannot ultimately satisfy it, and still less can it soothe his soul or meet the longings of his spirit.

II. Mere earthly knowledge is painful in its contents. How melancholy is the history of man when written down! Take away our hope in God, and we could bear to study history only as we forget all the higher ends it might serve as a school of training for immortal souls, and as the steps of a Divine Architect through the broken scaffolding and scattered stone-work upwards to a finished structure. The very glimpse of this is reviving; but to give up at once Architect and end, and see human lives scattered and strewn across weary ages, and human hearts torn and bleeding with no abiding result—this surely would fill a thoughtful mind with pain. The more of such history, the more of sorrow.

III. Mere earthly knowledge is hopeless in its issue. For an illustration of this we may take the field of abstract thought. Let a man seek the origin and end of things without God, and doubt grows as search deepens, for doubt is on the face of all things if it be in the heart of the inquirer. As he enlarges the circumference of knowledge he enlarges the encircling darkness, and even the knowledge yields no ray of true satisfaction.

IV. Mere earthly knowledge is discouraging in its personal results. We may consider here the moral nature of man. Earthly science can do very much to improve man's external circumstances. It can occupy his reason; it can refine and gratify his taste. But there are greater wants that remain. If the man seek something to fill and warm his heart, all the

wisdom of this world is only a cold phosphorescence. The tree of knowledge never becomes the tree of life.

V. Mere earthly knowledge has so brief a duration. Here we may contemplate life as a whole. If the thought of God be admitted, all real knowledge has the stamp of immortality; but if there be nothing of this, "in one day all man's thoughts perish." "The wise man dieth, and the fool also." The sweeter truth is to the taste, the more bitter must be the thought of leaving the pursuit of it for ever.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 44.

MELANCHOLY arises: I. From the thought that life is too short even for the most ardent labour to wrest from the bosom of nature or the ocean of the soul a thousandth part of their secrets. "Death comes," we think. "Is all I have done for others and learnt for myself lost? Why may I not live to finish my work, to complete and round my knowledge? If death be all, then the increase of my knowledge is the increase of my sorrow." The remedy and the answer lie in the teaching of Christ. He has brought, it is true, upon the world an increased dread of death, for He has deepened the sense of moral responsibility; but in deepening responsibility He has also brought upon the world an increased delight in life, because He has made life more earnest, active, and progressive. The remedy then, when the thought of death comes to shroud our little term of being with melancholy, is to take up with eagerness again the duties and responsibilities of life. We look to Christ, and the two sources of the melancholy of which we speak —the idea of our work perishing, the idea of a cessation of the growth of knowledge—vanish away. (1) He died, it is true, when half the natural sands of life were run; but we see that His labour has not died with Him. It has passed as a power and life into the world. (2) In Him we are ourselves immortal, and the work which we have started and left to others here we carry on ourselves in the larger world beyond. But if so, it will require added knowledge, and indeed in its progress it will necessarily store up knowledge. In Christ we know that we shall never cease to learn.

II. The second source of melancholy is retrospective thought. Christ calls us to a higher thought of life. "Let dead idols bury themselves," He says; "come away from them, and follow Me; there are other ideals in front, better and larger than the past." It is the one inspiring element of Christianity that it throws us

in boundless hope upon the future, and forbids us to dwell in the poisonous shadows of the past. We are to wake up satisfied in the likeness of Christ, the ever-young humanity. Therefore, forgetting those things which are behind, let us press forward unto the mark of the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

III. A third cause of melancholy is the sadness of the world. What is its remedy? The true remedy is to penetrate steadily into the depths of the dreadful mystery; to comprehend what destiny, and evil, and death mean; to go down into hell, and know it, and conquer it. This is what Christ did in resolute action upon earth; and out of this meeting of sorrow and evil face to face, not by passing them by and ignoring them, sprang His conquest. Evil was overthrown, sorrow was changed into joy, death was swallowed up in victory, because He went down into hell.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 243.

WE may contradict this text as we please, but we do not in reality contradict it by asserting its opposite; we only complete it by asserting its other half. Both statements are half-truths. The whole truth of the thing is only found in the assertion of both. He that increaseth knowledge increaseth pleasure, and—increaseth sorrow. This is what Albert Dürer saw and engraved in his subtle print of "Melencolia." It would be especially true in the artist's time of those who were attempting to penetrate into the secrets of the physical world. For the true methods of scientific investigation had not been found. We are freed from that grief, for we are consciously advancing, having found true methods; but the same profound pain besets us in the science of metaphysics and of theology, and for the same reason: the want of true methods.

I. The melancholy which arises from the vague answers which we can only suggest to many of our deepest questions is made greater by the clear answers which our questions receive in science. Distinctness in one sphere seems to suggest that distinctness might be reached in all *if* we had power. We have wings, then; but we have the misery of knowing that they are not strong enough.

II. What is the remedy for the sadness of increased uncertainty which growing knowledge has added to spiritual problems? The remedy is plainly stated in the New Testament. But let us see if we cannot approach the New Testament state-

ment from the side of scientific practice, and so strengthen its force. The certainties of science are mixed up also with uncertainties. Towards these uncertainties what are the practice and attitude of men of science? It is that of men who possess a "faith which worketh by love." They believe in truth, and their faith works through love of truth. The result has been the swiftest and the safest success. In other spheres then, and in a different meaning, this text is true: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." In every way this is a lesson which we would do well to learn. The root of our cowardice, of our hesitation, of our inactive melancholy, is our faithlessness. We are not asked at first to believe in certain doctrines or in the opinions of men. We are asked to believe in eternal right, in a Father of spirits whose will is good. This is not a faith in the commandments and doctrines of men. It is a faith in eternal love. It is not a blind credulity; it is a faith which the man has proved in adversity, and by which he has conquered.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 230.

REFERENCES: i. 18.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2661; J. Fordyce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 303. i.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 1. ii. 1.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 14. ii. 1-3.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 165.

Chap. ii., ver. 2.—"I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?"

SOLOMON says of the mirthful man, of the man who makes others laugh, that he is a madman. We need not suppose that all laughter is indiscriminately condemned, as though gloom marks a sane person and cheerfulness an insane. "Rejoice evermore" is a Scriptural direction, and blithe-heartedness ought to be both felt and displayed by those who know that they have God for their Guardian and Christ for their Surety. It is the laughter of the world which the wise man calls madness.

1. That conflict of which this creation is the scene, and the leading antagonists in which are Satan and God, is a conflict between falsehood and truth. And it is in consequence of this that so much criminality is everywhere in Scripture attached to a lie, and that those on whom a lie may be charged are represented as more especially obnoxious to the anger of God. Now, whilst the bold and direct falsehood gains for itself general execration, mainly perhaps because felt to militate

against the general interest, there is a ready indulgence for the more sportive falsehood which is rather the playing with truth than the making a lie. Here it is that we shall find laughter which is madness, and identify with a madman him by whom the laughter is raised. The man who passes off a clever fiction, or amusingly distorts an occurrence, or dexterously misrepresents a fact, may say that he only means to be amusing; but as he can hardly fail to lower the majesty of truth in the eyes of his neighbour, there may be ample reason for assenting to the wise man's decision, "I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?"

II. But it is not perhaps till laughter is turned upon sacred things that we have before us the madness in all its wildness and injuriousness. The man who in any way exercises his wit upon the Bible conveys undoubtedly an impression, whether he intend it or not, that he is not a believer in the inspiration of the Bible; and he may do far more mischief to the souls of his fellow-men than if he engaged openly in assaulting the great truths of Christianity.

III. The great general inference from this subject is that we ought to set a watch upon our tongues, to pray God to keep the door of our lips. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2532.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 14. ii. 4-11.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 313.

Chap. ii., ver. 11.—"I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do."

THE general practice of men of business, their custom of year by year taking stock, examining their books, and striking a balance to know how they stand, is a lesson of the highest value. Our everlasting salvation may turn on it. People go on dreaming that all is right when all is wrong, nor wake to the dreadful truth till they open their eyes in torment. If men take such care of their earthly fortunes, how much greater our need to see how we stand with God, and do with our spiritual what all wise merchants do with their earthly interests: review the transactions of every year.

I. In this review we should inquire what we have done for God. We have had many, daily, innumerable opportunities of serving Him, speaking for Him, working for Him, not sparing ourselves for Him who spared not His own Son for us. Yet

how little have we attempted; and how much less have we done in the spirit of our Saviour's words, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" It is impossible even now to review our lives without feeling that there is no hope for us out of Christ, and that the best and the busiest have been unprofitable servants.

II. In this review we should inquire what we have done for ourselves. If "the harvest is past, and the summer ended, and we are not saved," what other verdict than "Vanity!" can conscience and truth pronounce on the years that are gone? Years are lost, but the soul is not yet lost. There is still time to be saved. Make for the city of refuge. Believe in Christ, for whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but hath everlasting life.

III. In this review we should inquire what we have done for others. Suppose that our blessed Lord, sitting down on Olivet to review the years of His busy life, had looked on all the works which His hands had wrought, what a crowd, a long procession, of miracles and mercies had passed before Him! Trying our piety by this test, what testimony does our past life bear to its character? Happy those who, at however great a distance, and in however imperfect a manner, have attempted to follow Christ!

In conclusion: (1) This review, God's Spirit blessing it, should awaken careless sinners. (2) This review should stir up God's people.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Way to Life*, p. 61.

REFERENCES: ii. 11.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 38. ii. 12-14.—*Ibid.*, p. 85. ii. 12-23.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 49. ii. 12-26.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xii., p. 70; G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 52; R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 65; J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 22.

Chap. ii., vers. 16-33.—"There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool," etc.

I. THE noblest renown is posthumous fame, and the most refined ambition is the desire for such fame. And of this more exalted ambition it would appear that Solomon had felt the stirrings. But even that cold comfort was entirely frozen in the thought which followed. From the lofty pinnacle to which, as a philosophic historian, he had ascended, Solomon could look down and see not only the fallibility of his coevals, but the forgetfulness of the generations following. He knew that there

had often been great men in the world; but he could not hide it from himself how little these men had grown already, and how infinitesimal the greatest would become if the world should only last a few centuries longer. And so far Solomon was right.

II. But if this be the phantom for which the worldling toils and sighs, there is a posthumous fame which is no illusion. If there be no eternal remembrance of the world's wise men any more than of its fools, it is otherwise with the wise ones of the heavenly kingdom. God has so arranged it that "the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance." There is not in all the universe a holy being but God has found for it a resting-place in the love of other holy beings, and that not temporarily, but for all eternity. The only posthumous fame that is truly permanent is the memory of God; and the only deathless names are theirs for whose living persons He has found a place in His own love, and in the love of holy beings like-minded with Himself.

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture VII.

REFERENCES: ii. 24-26.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 106. ii.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 26. iii. 1.—H. Hayman, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 139. iii. 1-8.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 92. iii. 1-15.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 75. iii. 1, 16-22.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 152.

Chap. iii., vers. 1-15 (Revised Version).—"To everything there is a season. . . . In the heart of everything God hath set its era."

I. NOT only has God made everything, but there is a beauty in this arrangement where all is fortuitous to us, but all is fixed by Him. "He hath made everything beautiful in its time," and that season must be beautiful which to infinite love and wisdom seems the best. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the creation;" and, so to speak, each day that dawns, though its dawning include an earthquake, a battle, or a deluge—each day that dawns, however many it surprises, is no surprise to Him who sees the end from the beginning, and who in each evolving incident but sees the fulfilment of His "determined counsel"—the translation into fact of one other omniscient picture of the future.

II. The works of God are distinguished by opportuneness of development and precision of purpose. There is a season for each of them, and each comes in its season. All of them have a function to fulfil, and they fulfil it. To which (ver. 14) the

Preacher adds that they are all of their kind consummate, so perfect that no improvement can be made; and left to themselves, they will be perpetual. How true is this regarding God's greatest work: redemption! In doing it, He has done it "for ever."

III. There is a uniformity in the Divine procedure (ver. 15). There are certain great principles from which infinite wisdom never deviates. Through all the operations of nature, providence, and grace "that which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past."

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture VIII.

REFERENCE: iii. 1-8.—Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 334.

Chap. iii., ver. 1—chap. v., ver. 20.

A PROFOUND gloom rests on the second act or section of this drama. It teaches us that we are helpless in the iron grip of laws which we had no voice in making; that we often lie at the mercy of men whose mercy is but a caprice; that in our origin and end, in body and spirit, in faculty and prospect, in our lives and pleasures, we are no better than the beasts that perish; that the avocations into which we plunge, amid which we seek to forget our sad estate, spring from our jealousy the one of the other, and tend to a lonely miserliness, without a use or a charm.

I. The Preacher's handling of this subject is very thorough and complete. According to him, men's excessive devotion to affairs springs from "a jealous rivalry the one with the other;" it tends to form in them a grasping, covetous temper which can never be satisfied, to produce a materialistic scepticism of all that is noble and spiritual in thought and action, to render their worship formal and insincere, and in general to incapacitate them for any quiet, happy enjoyment of their life. This is his diagnosis of their disease.

II. But what checks, what correctives, what remedies, would the Preacher have us apply to the diseased tendencies of the time? How shall men of business save themselves from that excessive devotion to its affairs which breeds so many portentous evils? (1) The very sense of the danger to which they are exposed—a danger so insidious, so profound, so fatal—should surely induce caution and a wary self-control. (2) The Preacher gives us at least three serviceable maxims. To all men of business conscious of their special dangers and anxious to avoid them he

says, (*a*) Replace the competition which springs from your jealous rivalry with the co-operation which is born of sympathy and breeds goodwill. (*b*) Replace the formality of your worship with a reverent and steadfast sincerity. (*c*) Replace your grasping self-sufficiency with a constant holy trust in the fatherly providence of God.

S. Cox, *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 140.

REFERENCES: iii. 2.—G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 277; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 57. iii. 4.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 334; W. Braden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 81; G. Rogers, *Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., p. 91. iii. 6.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 107. iii. 7.—A. A. Bonar, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 123. iii. 9-22.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 107.

Chap. iii., ver. 11.—"He hath made everything beautiful in his time."

I. THIS truth becomes more manifestly true in things in proportion as their nature rises. Everything in the world must be in its true place and time, or it is not beautiful. That is true from the lowest to the highest, only with the lowest it is not easy to discover it. It does not seem to matter where the pebble lies, on this side of the road or on the other. It may indeed do sad mischief out of its place, but its place is a wide one. The things of higher nature are more fastidious in their demands. This law holds between different kinds of men. The highest natures are most dependent upon timeliness and fitness. They must act at the right moment. When the great feast was ready at Jerusalem, and the brethren of Jesus were going up from Nazareth, as they went every year, they urged Jesus to go with them; and His answer was, "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready." There was something so sad and so noble in His words. They, with no recognised mission, might go when and where they would. They, with no burden on their shoulders, might walk freely over the whole earth. But He, with His task, His duty—His Father's name to glorify, His brethren's souls to save, the kingdom of heaven to set up—He must wait till the door opened. He could walk only where the way was wide enough for Him to pass with His burden.

II. All the events of life, all of God's dispensations, get their real beauty, or ugliness from the times in which they come to us or in which we come to them.

III. There are continual applications of our truth in the religious life. Each experience of Christian life is good and

comely in its true place, when it comes in the orderly sequences of Christian growth, and only there, not beautiful when it comes artificially forced in where it does not belong.

IV. This truth is at the bottom of any clear notion about the character of sin. We say that we are sinful, but really we are always passing over the essential sinfulness into the things around us. It is these wicked things that make us wicked. But here comes up our truth that there are no wicked things; that wickedness is not in things, but in the displacement and misuse of things: and there is nothing which, kept in its true place and put to its true use, is not beautiful and good.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 244.

I. THE difference between the splendid world of vegetation, with its myriad colours and its ever-changing life, between the animal world, with its studied gradations of form and of development, and man, is this: God hath set eternity in our hearts. All creation around us is satisfied with its sustenance; we alone have a thirst and a hunger for which the circumstances of our life have no meat and drink. In the burning noonday of life's labour man sits—as the Son of man once sat—by well-sides weary, and, while others can slake their thirst with that water, he needs a living water; while others go into cities to buy meat, he has need of and finds a sustenance that they know not of.

II. The truer and the nobler man is, the more certainly he feels all this, the more keenly he realises eternity in his heart. There are none of us, however, who do not feel it sometimes. Try to crush it with the weight of mere worldly care; try to destroy it with the enervating influences of passion or of pleasure; try to benumb it with the cold, calculating spirit of greed: you cannot kill it. God hath set eternity in our hearts. He has given us a hunger which can be satisfied only with the Bread of Life, a thirst which can be quenched only by the living water from the Rock of Ages.

III. Eternity is in our hearts; and there is a strange contrast between it and the world in which we all are, for which alone some of us are living. To do our duty here, to trust calmly in a future with God, where all our higher cravings shall be satisfied—that was the conclusion at which the Preacher arrived as the sustaining power amid the wrongs, and weariness, and inequalities of life. We stand with that great teacher in the twilight, but *our* faces are turned towards the rising Sun. God hath set eternity in our hearts. Are we living worthy of it?

The only way of doing so is by clinging close to Him, by dying with Him to all that He died to save us from and living worthy of that life and immortality which He hath brought from out of the mists of speculation unto the light of truth by His Gospel.

T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 23.

Chap. iii., ver. 11.—"He hath made everything beautiful in his time: also He hath set the world in their heart."

THE word rendered "world" is a very frequent one in the Old Testament, and never has but one meaning; and that meaning is eternity. "He hath set eternity in their heart." Here are two antagonistic facts. There are transient things, a vicissitude which moves within natural limits, temporary events which are beautiful in their season; but there is also the contrasted fact that the man who is thus tossed about, as by some great battledore, wielded by giant powers in mockery, from one changing thing to another, has relations to something more lasting than the transient. He lives in a world of fleeting change, but he has "eternity" in his heart.

I. Consider eternity set in every human heart. This may be either a declaration of the immortality of the soul, or it may mean, as I rather suppose it to do, the consciousness of eternity which is part of human nature. We are the only beings on this earth who can think the thought, or speak the word, eternity. Other creatures are happy while immersed in time; we have another nature, and are undisturbed by a thought which shines high above the roaring sea of circumstance in which we float. The thought is in us all, a presentiment and a consciousness; and that universal presentiment itself goes far to establish the reality of the unseen order of things to which it is directed. By the make of our spirits, by the possibilities that dawn dim before us, by the thoughts "whose very sweetness yieldeth proof that they were born for immortality"—by all these and a thousand other signs and facts in every human life, we say, "God has set eternity in their hearts."

II. The disproportion between this our nature and the world in which we dwell. Man, with eternity in his heart, with the hunger in his spirit after an unchanging whole, an absolute good, an ideal perfectness, an immortal being, is condemned to the treadmill of transitory revolution. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." It is limited; it is changeful; it slips from under us as we stand upon it: and therefore mystery and perplexity stoop down upon the providence of

God, and misery and loneliness enter into the heart of man. These changeful things—they do not meet our ideal; they do not satisfy our wants; they do not last even our duration.

III. These thoughts lead us to consider the possible satisfying of our souls. The Preacher in his day learned that it was possible to satisfy the hunger for eternity, which had once seemed to him a questionable blessing. He learned that it was a loving Providence which had made man's home so little fit for him, that he might seek "the city which hath foundations." And we, who have a further word from God, may have a fuller and yet more blessed conviction, built upon our own happy experience, if we choose, that it *is* possible for us to have that deep thirst slaked, that longing appeased. Love Christ, and then the eternity in the heart will not be a great aching void, but will be filled with the everlasting life which Christ gives and is.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 209.

REFERENCES: iii. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 426; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 38; W. Park, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 259; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 184.

Chap. iii., vers. 12, 13.—"I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God."

EVEN in the days of his vanity, Solomon saw that there would be more happiness if there were less hankering. Are the cases not numberless where, for all purposes of enjoyment, labour is lost because coupled with the constant lust of farther acquirement, or because of a strange oblivion of his own felicity on the part of the favoured possessor?

I. One great source of our prevailing joylessness is our inadvertency. We need to meditate on our human happiness. There is for our meditation, daily, hourly, lifelong, God's chief mercy—that largess of unprecedented love which is not the envied distinction of some far-off world, but is God's gift unspeakable to you, to me.

II. Another source of depression is distrustfulness. Let us rejoice in the present, and let us trust for the future. Let us pray and strive till our frame of mind is more in unison with the Lord's kindness; and in every gracious providence and in every spiritual mercy bestowed on ourselves or others dear to

us let us recognise the merciful kindness of the Lord, and let us acknowledge what we recognise.

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 206.

Chap. iii., ver. 14.—"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever."

IT is a thought worthy of Almighty God that everything He touches partakes of His own immortality; that He cannot lay to His hand in vain; that what has once lain in His counsels must one day, sooner or later, stand out into the light, and that which once has taken form under His power must go on for ever and ever.

I. The heavens which God made at the first and the earth which God made at the first—they were and they are eternal. This world, or at least part of it, was made a paradise. Think you that man's rebellion has put God away from His first design? Nay, it has confirmed it; it has secured it. The sin brought the Cross, the Cross brought the throne of Jesus, and the throne of Jesus shall restore, and restore ten-thousandfold, the forfeited Eden.

II. From time to time God has opened His mouth and made known to man the future. And so it comes to pass that we have the "sure word of prophecy." And what is a prophecy? A thing for ever, with manifold intent. And the whole Bible—what is the Bible but one mind once revealed? And yet all the things which are transacted upon this globe—all that men say, and think, and do, all joys and sorrows, all good and evil—are only verifications and transcripts of that book; and constantly we meet God's word in our everyday life. And as I trace that strange harmony, that response between God's word and God's world, "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever."

III. These curious bodies of ours—they are God's masterpiece. And when these bodies, spiritual, but the same, come up like the flower from the seed, what is this but "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever"? And if so with the body, how much more with the soul. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1868, p. 44.

Chap. iii., ver. 15.—"God requireth that which is past."

I. GOD requireth the past throughout the universe. What are our sciences but memories of the past? Astronomy is the

memory of the universe; geology is the memory of the earth; history is the memory of the human race. There is nothing forgotten or left behind. The past is brought forward into the present, and out of the past the future grows. The reproduction of long-overpassed forms, the striking lack of varieties, and the recurrence of hybrids into the mother-species are all familiar illustrations of the persistency of memory in the organic world. Nature never forgets. Nothing perishes without leaving a record of it behind. The past history of the universe is not only preserved in the memory of God, but is also inscribed upon its own tablets.

II. God requireth the past for our present consolation. He takes up all we have left behind in the plenitude of His existence. The friends who have gone from us live in Him; the days that are no more are revived in Him. The successive periods of our existence, like lights and shadows on a sunny hill, have not perished in the using; their fleeting moments and impressions have been laid up for ever in the storehouse of the infinite mind. In converse with Him in whom thus all our life is hid, upon whose mind the whole picture of our existence is mirrored, we feel that, though lonely, we are not alone; though the perishing creatures of a day, we are living even now in eternity.

III. God requireth the past for its restoration. As the context indicates, it is a law of the Divine manifestation, a mode of the Divine working in every department, that the past should be brought forward into the present, the old reproduced in the new. God never wearies of repeating the old familiar things. He keeps age after age, generation after generation, year after year, the same old home-feeling in His earth for us. And is not this a strong argument that He will keep the old home-feeling for us in heaven; that we shall find ourselves beyond the river of death in the midst of all the former familiar things of our life, just as when we get out of the winter gloom and desolation of any year we find ourselves in the midst of all that made the former springs and summers so sweet and precious to us?

IV. God requireth the past for judgment. It is an awful thought that the indictment of the impenitent sinner at the bar of Divine justice has been carried about with him unconsciously all his life in his own bosom, that he himself is the strongest witness against himself. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked and slothful servant."

H. MACMILLAN, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 284.

Chap. iii., vers. 19-21.—"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity," etc.

HAS man, then, no real pre-eminence over the beast? Apparently, if we grant the assumption of the Epicurean, this is the conclusion to which we must come. If man have merely an animal existence, if he have no relations to a spiritual world, if when he dies he perishes, then in what respects is he better than the beasts?

I. To this it may be replied by pointing to man's intellectual and moral endowments as conferring upon him an undeniable superiority over the brutes. There is no need to deny or question the worth and preciousness of the qualities which man thus possesses. But the more costly a machine is, so much the more is it an evil if it fail of the end for which it has been constructed. In such a case we are ready to mourn over the useless expenditure, the misapplied ingenuity, the worse than wasted power, which such a splendid failure exhibits, and are constrained to say, Whatever may be the apparent superiority of this structure over the humbler structures by its side, in which no such deficiency or failure appears, in reality the latter is to be preferred to the former; the latter, to all intents and purposes, is better than the former. It is just to such a conclusion that we shall be forced to come concerning man if we leave out of view his spiritual relations, his relations to God and to a future state of being. If we confine our view of man to his mere earthly state and animal being, what can we make of it but that he is a great mistake, a contrivance that cannot obey its master-power without frustrating the very end for which that power was placed in mastery over it? so that it would seem as if it would have been better for him to have been made as the sheep or the ox, that have no understanding, than to be endowed as he is only to be less happy and less orderly than they.

II. From so gloomy and so revolting a conclusion there seems to be but one way of escape, and that is by assuming that man's earthly being is not his whole being or the most important part of it. Man's real dignity and supremacy lies in this, that he is made for immortality; that he is capacious of the Divine; that he has relations to the infinite and the eternal; that his present state is but the vestibule of his being; and that when his journey through this toilsome and hazardous waste of earth shall have been accomplished he shall, provided he have worthily achieved

his probation, reach the proper home and resting-place of his spirit in heaven.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Sermons*, p. 238.

REFERENCES: iii. 16-22.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 87. iii. 18-iv. 4.—J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 44. iii. 22.—J. F. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 296. iii.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 48; G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 66.

Chap. iv., ver. 1.—"Behold the tears of such as were oppressed."

IT is a great principle, and not to be lost sight of, the weakness of oppression, the terrible strength of the oppressed. And though Solomon felt so perturbed by the prosperous cruelty he witnessed, had he bent his eye a little longer in the direction where it eventually rested, he would have found a Comforter for the oppressed, and would have seen the impotence of the oppressor. On the side of the oppressed is Omnipotence, and the most deathless of foes is a victim. Still liberty, or exemption from man's oppression, is a priceless blessing; and it may be worth while to ask, What can Christians do for its culture and diffusion?

I. Yourselves be free. Seek freedom from fierce passions and dark prejudices. If you are led captive by the devil at his will, you are sure to become an oppressor.

II. Beware of confounding liberty with licence. One of the greatest blessings in a State or in a Christian Church is good government; but, from mistaken notions of independence, it is the delight of some to "speak evil of dignities." The man who is magnanimous in obeying is likely to be mighty in command.

III. Cultivate a humane and gentle spirit. Here it is that the mollifying religion of Jesus comes in as the great promoter of freedom and the great opponent of oppression. By infusing a benevolent spirit into the bosom of the Christian, it makes him the natural guardian of weakness and the natural friend of innocence.

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture IX.

Chap. iv., ver. 1—chap. v., ver. 7.

I. IN the fourth chapter Koheleth comes to the conclusion that life is essentially and irretrievably wretched—wretched not because (as he had formerly thought) it would so soon be over,

but wretched because it lasted too long. All that pleasure did for him was thus to increase his gloom. There was one thing he had forgotten in making out his programme: he had forgotten the miseries of other people. The prosperity he secured for himself did not remove their adversity, but only brought it out into more startling relief. He was infected by their wretchedness, for in the midst of all his dissipation he had preserved a kindly heart. "I considered," he says, "the tears of those who are oppressed, and who have no comforter." The oppression of the poor by the rich was one of the most characteristic phases of Oriental society. To be poor was to be weak, and to be weak was to be reduced more or less into the condition of a slave.

II. In ver. 4 Koheleth makes a new departure. He remarks that greed is at the bottom of a good deal of human misery. All work, he says, and all dexterity in work, is due to envy, to a jealous determination to outstrip our neighbours, to what Mallock calls the "desire for inequality." In contrast to the career of selfish isolation, Koheleth describes the advantages of sympathetic co-operation with one's fellow-men. We should not, he says, strive *against* one another, each for his own good; we should strive *with* one another, each for the good of the whole. Co-operation is preferable to competition.

III. It now occurs to Koheleth that we may perhaps find some help in religious observances. He has already pointed out to us how we are hemmed in on all sides by limitations and restrictions. It must evidently be important what attitude we assume towards the Power which thus checks and thwarts us. Take care, he says, how you go into the house of God, how you perform your sacrifices, and prayers, and vows. He teaches us, as wise men have always taught, that obedience is better than sacrifice. Again, the value of prayer depends not on its length, but on its sincerity. Speak only out of the fulness of your heart. God is not to be trifled with. He cannot be deluded into mistaking for worship what is mere idle talk.

A. W. MOMERIE, *Agnosticism*, p. 204.

REFERENCES: iv. 1-3.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 174; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 101. iv. 1-8.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 136. iv. 4-6.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 196. iv. 5, 6.—J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 54. iv. 9, 10.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 512; C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 16. iv. 9-16.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 150. iv. 12.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 9; J. Keble, *Sermons*

from Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday, p. 395. iv. 13.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 234; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 1. iv.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 79. iv., v.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 79.

Chap. v., ver. 1.—"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools."

I. God, who is present at all times and everywhere, has nevertheless appointed particular seasons and especial places in which He has promised to manifest Himself more clearly, more powerfully, and more graciously to men. The pious heart finds a temple of God everywhere. It is itself a temple of God. Yet even hence the need of other temples does appear, for what one good man considered by himself is, that God commands us all as a body to be. In order that we may all be thus united together as one man, we must have public assemblies, we must have visible temples, in which God, angels, and men may together meet.

II. From the consideration of the dignity and blessedness of men regarded in their relations to one another and to the holy angels, and as united for the performance of that work wherein their highest dignity and blessedness consists—namely, intercourse with God—the necessity which thence arises for the existence of holy places is clearly evident. (1) God commanded Moses to frame a tabernacle in which He might dwell among His people Israel. (2) The constant attendance of our blessed Lord at the public worship of the synagogue and that of the Apostles at the Temple afford sufficient proof of their opinion concerning this matter.

III. To keep our feet diligently is to order devoutly not merely our thoughts, but our words, looks, and gestures, lest we be guilty not only of irreverence towards God, but of folly towards ourselves and of sin towards our brethren.

C. Wordsworth, *Sermons Preached at Harrow School*, p. 22.

References: v. 1.—J. G. Deirs, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 904; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 253; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vii., p. 191; J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 252. v. 1, 2.—C. J. Vaughan, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 358.

Chap. v., vers. 1-7.—"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God," etc.

A thoughtless resorting to the sanctuary, inattention and indevotion there, and precipitancy in religious vows and promises

are still as common as in the days of Solomon. And for these evils the only remedy is that which he prescribes: a heartfelt and abiding reverence.

I. There is a preparation for the sanctuary. Not only should there be prayer beforehand for God's blessing there, but a studious effort to concentrate on its services all our faculties. In the spirit of that significant Oriental usage which drops its sandals at the palace door, the devout worshipper will put off his travel-tarnished shoes—will try to divest himself of secular anxieties and worldly projects—when the place where he stands is converted into holy ground by the words, "Let us worship God."

II. In devotional exercises be intent and deliberate (vers. 2, 3). Like a dream which is a medley from the waking day, which into its own warp of delirium weaves a shred from all the day's engagements, so, could a fool's prayer be exactly reproduced, it would be a tissue of trifles intermingled with vain repetitions. For such vain repetitions the remedy still is reverence.

III. Be not rash with vows and religious promises (vers. 4-7). If Christians make voluntary vows at all, it should be with clear warrant from the word, for purposes obviously attainable, and for limited periods of time. Whilst every believer feels it his reasonable service to present himself to God a living sacrifice, those who wish to walk in the liberty of sonship will seek to make their dedication, as a child is devoted to its parents, not so much in the stringent precision of a legal document as in the daily forthgoings of a filial mind.

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture X.

REFERENCES: v. 1-7.—J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 66. v. 1-9.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 125. v. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 12; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vii., p. 201. v. 2-6.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 270. v. 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 100. v. 7-12.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 217. v. 8-13.—*Ibid.*, p. 286. v. 8-20.—J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 79.

Chap. v., ver. 8—chap. vii., ver. 18.

I. WE left Koheleth in the act of exhorting us to fear God. The fear of God, of course, implies a belief in the Divine superintendence of human affairs. This belief Koheleth now proceeds to justify. (1) Do not be alarmed, he says, when you see the injustice of oppressors. There are limits beyond which this injustice cannot go. God is the Author of this

system of restriction and punishment. (2) The Divine government may be seen in the law of compensation. Pleasure does not increase, but, on the contrary, rather diminishes, with the increase of wealth. The rich man has little to do but to watch others devouring his wealth. (3) The excessive desire for wealth often over-reaches itself, and ends in poverty.

II. Koheleth asserts (vi. 7) that no one ever extracts enjoyment out of life. "The labour of man is for his mouth"—that is, for enjoyment—but he is never satisfied. His very wishes give him not his wish. The fact is, says Koheleth, returning to a former thought, everything has been predetermined for us; we are hemmed in by limits and fatalities to which we can but submit. It is useless trying to contend with One mightier than ourselves.

III. He now takes a new departure. He inquires whether true happiness is to be found in a life of social respectability or popularity. In chap. vii. and the first part of chap. viii. he gives us some of the maxims by which such a life would be guided. The thoughts are very loosely connected, but the underlying idea is this: the popular man, the successful man, the man whom society delights to honour, is always characterised by prudence, discretion, moderation, self-control, and by a certain *savoir-faire*—an instinct which teaches him what to do and when to do nothing. (1) The wise man is ready to receive instruction not only from the silent teaching of the dead, but also from the advice of the living if they are wiser than himself. (2) The prudent man of the world is distinguished by a cheerful, easy-going, happy temperament. Instead of longing for the past, he makes the best of the present. (3) Koheleth now propounds another maxim of worldly policy—a maxim in which we see him at his worst. A prudent man of the world will not trouble himself too much about righteousness. He cannot be quite sure that it will pay, though a certain amount of it is likely to help him on. And what is true of righteousness is true of wisdom. Poor Koheleth in his present mood has fallen into deep moral degradation. Policy has taken the place of duty. In the long run the policy of expediency, which he here calls wisdom, will turn out to be but folly.

A. W. MOMERIE, *Agnosticism*, p. 219.

Chap. v., vers. 9-20; chap. vi., vers. 1-9.—"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver," etc.

I. IN all grades of society human subsistence is very much the

same. Even princes are not fed with ambrosia, nor do poets subsist on asphodel. The profit of the earth is for all.

II. When a man begins to amass money, he begins to feed an appetite which nothing can appease, and which its proper food will only render fiercer. Therefore happy they who have never got enough to awaken the accumulating passion!

III. It is another consideration which should reconcile us to the want of wealth that as abundance grows, so grow the consumers, and of riches less perishable the proprietor enjoys no more than the mere spectator.

IV. Among the pleasures of obscurity, the next noticed is sound slumber. If the poor could get a taste of opulence, it would reveal to them strange luxuries in lowliness.

V. Wealth is often the ruin of its possessor. It is "kept for the owner to his hurt."

VI. Last of all are the infirmity and fretfulness which are the frequent companions of wealth.

VII. Whether your possessions be great or small, think only of the joys at God's right hand as your eternal treasure. Lead a life disentangled and expedite, setting your affections on things above and never so clinging to the things temporal as to lose the things eternal. The true disciple will value wealth chiefly as he can spend it on objects dear to his dear Lord.

J. HAMILTON, *The Royal Preacher*, Lecture XI.

REFERENCES: v. 10-vi. 12.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 137. v. 13-20.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 191. v. 14-17.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 310. vi. 2.—J. N. Norton, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 66.

Chap. vi., vers. 10-12.—**"That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with Him that is mightier than he," etc.**

I. FATE is fixed. All the past was the result of a previous destiny, and so shall be all the future. Such is the sentiment of the third chapter, and such appears to be the import of this passage. It must be conceded that the Saviour assumes a pre-ordination in all events. But then what sort of pre-ordination was it which the Saviour recognised? Was it mechanical or moral? Was it blind destiny or wise decree? Was it fate, or was it providence? As interpreted by "the only begotten Son from the bosom of the Father," that pre-arrangement of events which the theologian calls predestination,

and the philosopher necessity, and which the old heathenism called fate, is nothing more than the will of the Father—the good pleasure of that blessed and only Potentate whose omniscience foresaw all possibilities, and from out of all these possibilities whose benevolent wisdom selected the best and gave it being. It depends on whether we are spectators or sons, whether our emotion towards the Divine foreknowledge and sovereignty be, "O Fate, I fear thee," or "O Father, I thank Thee."

II. Man is feeble. Christless humanity is a very feeble thing. Redeemed and regenerate humanity is only a little lower than the angels.

III. Every joy is futile. "Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?" Enter into Christ's peace, and learn to delight in His perfections; and thus, while sinful pleasures lose their relish, lawful joys will acquire a flavour of sacredness and the zest of a sweet security. Or should the cistern break, and the creature fail, the infinite joy is Jehovah; and the soul cannot wither whose roots are replenished from that fountain unfailing.

IV. Life is fleeting. It is a "vain life," and all its days a "shadow." But Jesus Christ hath brought immortality to light. This fleeting life He hath rendered important as a "shadow from the rock Eternity."

V. The future is a dark enigma. "Who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?" It may quiet all the Christian's anxiety to know that when he himself is gone to be for ever with the Lord Christ's kingdom will be spreading in the world. "Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And He said, Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 146.

References: v. 12.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 189. v.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 96.

Chap. vi.

I. Throughout this sixth chapter the Preacher is speaking of the lover of riches, not simply of the rich man; not against wealth, but against mistaking wealth for the chief good. The man who trusts in riches is placed before us; and, that we may see him at his best, he has the riches in which he trusts. Yet because he does not accept his abundance as the gift of God, and hold the

Giver better than His gift, he cannot enjoy it. "All the labour of this man is for his mouth;" that is to say, his wealth, with all that it commands, appeals to sense and appetite: it feeds the lust of the eye, or the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life; and therefore "his soul cannot be satisfied therewith." *That* craves a higher nutriment, a more enduring good. God has put eternity into it; and how can that which is immortal be contented with the lucky haps and comfortable conditions of time? Unless some immortal provision be made for the immortal spirit, it will pine, and protest, and crave till all power of happily enjoying outward good be lost.

II. Look at your means and possessions. Multiply them as you will, yet there are many reasons why, if you seek your chief good in them, they should prove vanity and breed vexation of spirit. (1) One is that beyond a certain point you cannot use or enjoy them. (2) Another reason is that it is hard, so hard as to be impossible, for you to know "what it is good" for you to have. That on which you had set your heart may prove to be an evil rather than a good when at last you get it. (3) A third reason is that the more you acquire, the more you must dispose of when you are called away from this life; and who can tell what shall be after him?

These are the Preacher's arguments against love of riches. If we can trust in God to give us all that it will be really good for us to have, the arguments of the Preacher are full of comfort and hope for us, whether we be rich or whether we be poor.

S. Cox, *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 181.

REFERENCES: vi.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 122; J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 89. vi.-viii, 15.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 93. vii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1588; J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 159; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 204, vii. 1-4.—W. Simpson, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 286. vii. 1-10.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 221. vii. 1-14.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 151. vii. 2.—J. Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 379. vii. 2-5.—J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 336.

Chap. vii., ver 8.—"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

THE text expresses the general principle or doctrine that by the condition of our existence here, if things go right, a conclusion is better than a beginning. It is on the condition of our

existence in this world that this principle is founded. That condition is that everything is passing on toward something else in order to, and for the sake of, that something further on, so that its chief importance or value is in that something to be attained further on. And if that ulterior object be attained, and be worth all this preceding course of things, then "the end is better than the beginning." We have to consider the year on the supposition of our living through it. And it is most exceedingly desirable that in the noblest sense "the end" should be "better than the beginning." Consider what state of the case would authorise us at the end of the year to pronounce this sentence upon it.

I. The sentence may be pronounced if at the end of the year we shall be able, after deliberate conscientious reflection, to affirm that the year has been in the most important respects better than the preceding.

II. The sentence will be true if during the progress of the year we shall effectually avail ourselves of the lessons suggested by a review of the preceding year.

III. The text will be a true sentence if then we shall have good evidence that we are become really more devoted to God.

IV. It is but putting the same thing in more general terms to say, The end will be better than the beginning if we shall by then have practically learnt to live more strictly and earnestly for the greatest purposes of life.

V. If we shall have acquired a more effectual sense of the worth of time, the sentence will be true.

VI. It will, again, be true if with regard to fellow-mortals we can conscientiously feel that we have been to them more what Christians ought than in the preceding year.

VII. Another point of superiority we should hope the end may have over the beginning of the year is that of our being in a better state of preparation for all that is to follow.

VIII. It will be a great advantage and advancement to end the year with if we shall then have acquired more of a rational and Christian indifference to life itself.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: vii. 8.—J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 165; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 366.

Chap. vii., ver. 10.—"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."

THIS text has a natural and deep connection with Solomon and

his times. The former days were better than his days; he could not help seeing that they were. He must have feared lest the generation which was springing up should inquire into the reason thereof in a tone which would breed—which actually did breed—discontent and revolution. Therefore it was that Solomon hated all his labour that he had wrought under the sun, for all was vanity and vexation of spirit.

I. Of Christian nations these words are not true. They pronounce the doom of the old world, but the new world has no part in them, unless it copies the sins and follies of the old. And therefore for us it is not only an act of prudence, but a duty—a duty of faith in God, a duty of loyalty to Jesus Christ our Lord—not to ask why the former times were better than these. For they were not better than these. Each age has its own special nobleness, its own special use; but every age has been better than the age which went before it, for the Spirit of God is leading the ages on toward that whereof it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him."

II. The inquiry shows disbelief in our Lord's own words that all dominion is given to Him in heaven and earth, and that He is with us always, even to the end of the world. It is a vain inquiry, based on a mistake. When we look back longingly to any past age, we look not at the reality, but at a sentimental and untrue picture of our own imagination. We are neither to regret the past, nor rest satisfied in the present, but, like St. Paul, forgetting those things that are behind us, and reaching onward to those things that are before us, press forward each and all to the prize of our high calling in Jesus Christ.

C. KINGSLEY, *The Water of Life*, p. 189.

I. THIS is the outcry of every age. Certainly it is a great difficulty in the way of the evolution theory as the one explanation of man and of things. That it plays a very important part there can be no question; but looking at it as the one explanation, it is a fact that the past looms brighter in man's memory than either the present or the future: there are always rays of glory trailing down the vistas of time. Every movement for reformation is really, when you look into the springs of it, a lament for restoration; what man prays for always is the restoration of the glittering pageant, the golden saturnine reign. (1) By a wise law of Providence, time destroys all the wreck and

waste of the past and saves only the pleasures—destroys the chaff and saves the grain. (2) The worship of the past springs out of man's deep and noble dissatisfaction with the present.

II. We are always looking back with complaint and longing in our own personal lives. Always there is the great fact of childhood in our lives, the careless time, the joyous time, when the mere play of the faculties was a spring of enjoyment. The days of old were better than these. We are always mourning for a lost Eden, but a wilderness is better than Eden, for it is a pathway from Eden up to heaven.

III. Notice the unwisdom of the complaint. In the deepest realities of life, in the work and the purposes of God, the complaint is not true. The former days were *not* better, for you are now larger, stronger, richer in power, with a far further horizon round you. If something is lost, something more is gained at every step. It is all faithlessness which is at the root of this lamentation of man, which a sight of the realities of life and of Him whose hand is in mercy moving all the progresses of the world would correct. The world mourns the past because it does so little with the present. Faith, hope, and love would soon make a to-day which would cast all the yesterdays into the shade.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 925.

REFERENCES: vii. 11-29.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 250. vii. 12.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 240.

Chap. vii., ver. 14.—"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after Him."

THE wise Preacher is speaking here of the right use of the changeful phenomena and conditions of man's life on earth. God sets prosperity over against adversity, and He does this that man should find nothing after Him; that is, that the future should remain hid from man, so that he can at no time count upon it, but must ever wait upon God, the supreme Disposer of all things, and trust in Him alone. The principle here involved pervades the Divine administration, and receives numerous exemplifications even within the sphere of our observation.

I. Notice, first, the analogies which subsist between the natural and the spiritual world as a setting on a large scale of one thing over against another. How much the natural world may be employed to illustrate the world within, how much nature may be made in this way the handmaid of religion, and how much

the facts of secular life may be transformed into lessons of high moral and spiritual truth, every attentive reader of the Bible must have seen.

II. As a second illustration of the Divine operation suggested in the text may be mentioned the antagonisms by means of which the administration of sublunary affairs is carried on. Experience amply shows us that it is only by the balance of conflicting interests and powers that the social machine can be made to work easily and beneficially to all. It is under the same great law that God has placed the moral discipline of our race, for it is through the antagonism of joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, life and death, that the perfection of the individual and of the race is to be reached.

III. A third illustration is furnished by the compensations which we find in the world around us, and in God's dealings with us.

IV. Another set of illustrations is supplied by the relations which God has made us sustain to each other in family and social life. Of these relations the great principle is reciprocity. In all the relations of life God has set one thing over against another; and it is only as this is recognised, and the reciprocal duties thence arising are faithfully discharged, that the arrangement becomes a source of benefit to men.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Sermons*, p. 215.

REFERENCES: vii. 14.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 20; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, pp. 68, 74, and 7th series, p. 96; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 302; S. Cox, *An Expositor's Notebook*, p. 171. vii. 15-18.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 165.

Chap. vii., ver. 16.—"Be not righteous overmuch."

IT is no light argument for the Divine authority of the Bible that so little is to be found in it which can by any sophistry be perverted into an encouragement for sin. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that in two or three places, taken apart from the context or otherwise misquoted, it is just possible for an ignorant man very much in love with his sins to fancy that he finds an excuse for continuing in them. Perhaps no text has suffered more from this kind of perversion than the present one: "Be not righteous overmuch."

I. Consider how far this manner of speaking is justifiable in the persons who use it. It is only the light and superficial in Christian studies and the formalist in Christian practice

who show alarm at the thought of being too good. The text is oftener quoted in a mood half sportive, and as a short way of silencing unpleasant discussion, than as a serious ground of argument. But the misery of it is that men act on it quite in earnest. They evidently cannot themselves believe that it will bear the weight they lay upon it, and yet they are not afraid to conduct themselves as if it were the only commandment God had ever given.

II. Consider how far this opinion and the doctrine grounded upon it are consistent with the general tenor of Scripture. (1) This notion of over-righteousness cannot stand with that precious corner-stone of our faith the doctrine of the Atonement. For what need of a Redeemer to one who is already so far advanced in goodness that no more is wanted to bring him to heaven, to one who only requires a check lest in his too forward pursuit of the next world he miss the enjoyments of this? (2) Another test, the application of which will give the same result, is the doctrine of sanctification. God is dishonoured in His Spirit as well as in His Son by this fear of superfluous goodness. All holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works we daily acknowledge to be gifts of God, proceeding from Him through the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; and can we ever have too much of such gifts? (3) Another great doctrine which is utterly inconsistent with the vulgar use of the text is the inequality of the future rewards of the blessed in heaven. We know not exactly how low the least degree of obedience is; but this we are quite sure of: that he who aims no higher will be sure to fall short even of that, and that he who goes farthest beyond it will be most blessed. (4) If neither saint nor martyr, neither prophet nor apostle, though he did all that he was commanded, could do enough to make God his debtor, but had still need to confess himself an unprofitable servant, which of us all can ever be justified in saying, "Here I may stop short; I will not try to amend myself any farther, lest I be over-righteous"?

III. What if it should appear, on considering the text itself, that it was intended as a warning against the very error which it is so often and so unfortunately used to encourage? I would abide by the way of explaining the passage which supposes these two verses to be spoken by the inspired writer not in his own person, but in the person of an irreligious and worldly man, and the verse which follows them to be a caution against that erroneous view of things which they contain

and a reference to the only principle which can save us from such a fatal mistake; namely, the fear of God.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons Occasional and Parochial*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: vii. 16.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 327. vii. 18.—D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 83. vii. 19-29.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 175.

Chap. vii., ver. 19—chap. viii., ver. 15.

KOHFLETH seems to have had a suspicion all the time that his view of life was a low one. He intimates that he had tried for a better, but failed to reach it: "I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me." "Far remaineth" (so vii. 24 should read)—"Far remaineth what was far, and deep remaineth what was deep."

I. From his lower standpoint he now sets himself to inquire into the origin of evil. "I applied my mind," he says, "to discover the cause of wickedness, and vice, and mad folly." He finds it, as he thinks, in woman. By her fatal gift of beauty she often lures men to a doom more bitter than death; and at the best she has but a shallow, unbalanced nature, capable of doing much mischief, but incapable of doing any good. In these notions Koholeth does not stand alone. The depreciatory estimate of women used to be accepted almost as a truism, and was not unfrequently adopted by women themselves. It is a woman whom Euripides represents as saying that one man is better than a thousand of her sex.

II. To many of us these sentiments will appear almost inexplicable. Surely, we say to ourselves, the women of whom such things were said must have been very different from the women of the present day; and no doubt they were—different through no fault of their own, but by reason of the treatment to which they had been subjected. Contempt for women was at one time universal, and it inevitably had on them a deteriorating effect. As soon as woman received fair play, she proved herself not only equal to man, but superior, lacking, no doubt, some of his best qualities, but possessing others which more than compensated for the deficiency. Scarcely any one in the present day whose opinion deserves a moment's consideration would agree with Koheleth. Instead of his arithmetical calculation about the thousand men and the thousand women, most persons would substitute Oliver Wendell Holmes': that there are at least three saints among women for one among men.

A. W. MOMERIE, *Agnosticism*, p. 236.

Chap. vii., ver. 29.—"God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

We may well look back on the garden of Eden as we would on our own childhood. Adam's state in Eden seems to have been like the state of children now: in being simple, inartificial, inexperienced in evil, unreasoning, uncalculating, ignorant of the future, or, as men now speak, unintellectual.

I. Adam and Eve were placed in a garden to cultivate it. How much is implied even in this! If there was a mode of life free from tumult, anxiety, excitement, and fever of mind, it was the care of a garden. If the life of Christ and His servants be any guide to us, certainly it would appear as if the simplicity and the repose of life with which human nature began is an indication of its perfection. And again, does not our infancy teach us the same lesson, which is especially a season when the soul is left to itself, withdrawn from its fellows as effectually as if it were the only human being on earth, like Adam in his enclosed garden, fenced off from the world and visited by angels?

II. Fenced off from the world! Nay, fenced off even from itself, for so it is, and most strange too, that our infant and childish state is hidden from ourselves. We know not what it was, what our thoughts in it were, and what our probation, more than we know Adam's.

III. Another resemblance between the state of Adam in paradise and the state of children is this: that children are saved not by their purpose and habits of obedience, not by faith and works, but by the influence of baptismal grace. And into Adam God "breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul." What man fallen gains by dint of exercise, working up towards it by religious acts—that Adam had already acted *from*. He had that light within him which he might make brighter by obedience, but which he had not to create. This gift, which sanctified Adam and saves children, becomes the ruling principle of Christians generally when they advance to perfection. According as habits of holiness are matured, principle, reason, and self-discipline are unnecessary; a moral instinct takes their place in the breast, or rather, to speak more reverently, the Spirit is sovereign there.

IV. What is intellect itself, as exercised in the world, but a fruit of the Fall, not found in paradise or in heaven more than in little children, and at the utmost but tolerated in the Church, and only not incompatible with regenerate mind? Reason is God's gift, but so are the passions. Adam had the gift of reason, but so had he passions; but he did not *walk* by reason, nor was

he led by his passions. He, or at least Eve, was tempted to follow passion and reason instead of her Maker; and she fell. Reason has been as guilty as passion. God made man upright, and grace was his strength; but he has found out many inventions, and his strength is reason.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. v., p. 99.

REFERENCES: vii. 29.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 36; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 84; J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 358. vii.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 132; J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 101.

Chap. vii. and chap. viii., vers. 1-15.

I. THE endeavour to secure a competence may be not lawful only, but most laudable, since God means us to make the best of the capacities He has given us and the opportunities He sends us. Nevertheless we may pursue this right end from a wrong motive, in a wrong spirit. Both spirit and motive are wrong if we pursue our competence as though it were a good so great that we can know no happy content and rest unless we attain it. For what is it that animates such a pursuit save distrust in the providence of God? Left in His hands, we do not feel that we should be safe; whereas if we had our fortune in our own hands, and were secured against chances and changes by a comfortable investment or two, we should feel safe enough.

II. Our sympathies go with the man who seeks to acquire a good name, to grow wise, to live in the golden mean. But when he proceeds to apply his theory, to deduce practical rules from it, we can only give him a qualified assent, nay must often altogether withhold our assent. The prudent man is likely: (1) to compromise conscience (vers. 15-20); (2) to be indifferent to censure (vers. 21, 22); (3) to despise women (vers. 25-29); (4) to be indifferent to public wrong (viii. 1-13).

III. In the closing verses of the third section of the book, the Preacher lowers his mask, and tells us plainly that we cannot, and must not, rest in the theory he has just expounded; that to follow its counsels will lead us away from the chief good, not towards it. This new theory of life he confesses to be a "vanity" as great and deceptive as any of those he has hitherto tried. S. COX, *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 188.

REFERENCES: viii. 1.—T. Hammond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 333. viii. 1-8.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 281. viii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1697, and *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 201. viii. 8.—U. R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 38; A. Mursell, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 297.

Chap. viii., ver. 9.—"I applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun."

THE writer of these words means by "applying his heart" the exercise of his attention and his judgment. He was a general observer, with an exercise of his judgment. The Holy Scriptures plainly encourage an exercise of thoughtful attention on the actions and characters of men, and the course of the world's events. But now comes the question as to the proper manner of doing this, so that it may really be beneficial.

I. If this attention to the actions and events of the world be employed merely in the way of amusement, there will be little good.

II. It is necessary to have just principles or rules to be applied in our observation of the world. And in this matter the most fatal error is to take from the world itself our principles for judging the world. They must be taken absolutely from the Divine authority, and always kept true to the dictates of that.

III. Notice two or three points of view or general references in which we should exercise this attention and judgment. (1) The grand primary reference with which we survey the world of human action should be to God. (2) Our observation should have reference to the object of forming a true estimate of human nature. (3) It should have reference to the illustration and confirmation of religious truths. (4) A faithful corrective reference to ourselves in our observation of others is a point of duty almost too plain to need mentioning. (5) Our exercise of attention and judgment on "every work that is done under the sun" should be under the habitual recollection that soon we shall cease to look on them; and that instead we shall be witnessing their consequences, and in a mighty experience also ourselves of consequences.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 16.

REFERENCES: viii. 9-17.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 303. viii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 200. viii. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 313; C. G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 128; G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 184; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 259. viii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 148.

Chap. viii., ver. 16—chap. x., ver. 9.

I. AT the end of chap. viii. and the beginning of chap. ix., Koheleth points out that it is impossible for us to construct a satisfactory policy of life. "The work of God," or, as we say,

the ways of Providence, cannot be fathomed. To the wisest man, labour as he may, the drift of the Maker is dark. The enjoyment of life, he says, is your portion; that is, your destiny, your duty, your end. Therefore, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. The only thing in the universe we can be sure about is pleasure. Therefore let us get pleasure while we may.

II. He has shown us the uncertainty and consequent uselessness of piety. He has shown us that good men and bad men experience joy and sadness indiscriminately, and at last meet with the same fate of death. He now proceeds to point out (ix. 11) the uselessness of "wisdom and skill," of what we should call ability. Misfortunes come upon the most deserving, and they cannot be foreseen. And besides the thwarting of Providence, able men have to suffer from the ingratitude of their fellows. The world is slow to reward the ability to which it owes so much. Sometimes it does happen that the advice of a wise man is taken in spite of his being poor. But one fool (not sinner) destroyeth much good. The fool is a great power in the world, especially the conceited fool. His self-assurance is mistaken for knowledge, while the modesty of the wise man is thought to be ignorance.

III. It may strike you as strange that among the various aims in life which Koheleth discusses he never mentions character. And yet it would have been stranger if he had. For what is the good of character to a being who may at any moment be turned into clay? Convince me that I must be extinguished some day, and that I may be extinguished any day, and I, too, should agree with Koheleth that my only rational course was to enjoy to the utmost the few moments that might be vouchsafed to me. Let me feel, on the other hand, that I carry latent within me "the power of an endless life," and that some day in the great hereafter it is possible I may find myself "perfect even as God is perfect," and then I can despise pleasure; I can see beauty in pain; I can gather up the energies of my being and consecrate them to righteousness and to God with enthusiastic and unwavering devotion.

A. W. MOMERIE, *Agnosticism*, p. 252.

Chap. viii., ver. 16—chap. xii., ver. 7.

I. THE Preacher commences this section by carefully defining his position and equipment as he starts on his last course. (1)

His first conclusion is that wisdom, which of all temporal goods still stands foremost with him, is incapable of yielding a true content. Much as it can do for man, it cannot solve the moral problems which daily task and afflict his heart, the problems which he must solve before he can be at peace (viii. 16-ix. 6). (2) He reviews the pretensions of wisdom and mirth (ix. 7-10). To the baffled and hopeless devotee of wisdom he says, "Go, then, eat thy bread with gladness, and drink thy wine with a cheerful heart. Whatever you can get, get; whatever you can do, do. You are on your road to the dark, dismal grave, where there is no work nor device; there is the more reason therefore why your journey should be a merry one." (3) He shows that the true good is not to be found in devotion to affairs and its rewards (ix. 13-x. 20).

II. What the good is, and where it may be found, the Preacher now proceeds to show. (1) The first characteristic of the man who is likely to achieve the quest of the chief good is the charity which prompts him to be gracious, and show kindness, and do good, even to the thankless and ungracious. (2) The second characteristic is the steadfast industry which turns all seasons to account. Diligent and undismayed, he goes on his way, giving himself heartily to the present duty, "sowing his seed, morning and evening, although he cannot tell which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both shall prove good." (3) This man has learned one or two of the profoundest secrets of wisdom. He has learned that giving, we gain; and spending, thrive. He has also learned that a man's true care is himself; that his true business in the world is to cultivate a strong, dutiful character which shall prepare him for any world or any fate. He recognises the claims of duty and of charity, and does not reject these for pleasure. These keep his pleasures sweet and wholesome, prevent them from usurping the whole man and landing him in the weariness and satiety of disappointment. But lest even these safeguards should prove insufficient, he has also this: he knows that "God will bring him into judgment;" that all his work, whether of charity, or duty, or recreation, will be weighed in the balance of Divine justice (ver. 9). This is the simple secret of the pure heart—the heart that is kept pure amid all labours, and cares, and joys.

S. Cox, *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 221.

Reference: viii. 16-x.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 108.

Chap. viii., ver. 17.—"Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it."

ONE of the most curious things to think of in the world is the inconceivable number of secrets which lie around us in nature, in humanity, in the lives and characters of those whom we know or those we love. It is even more curious to think how much of the interest of human life, of its work, its thoughts, of its affections, dwells in the fact of these secrets. The sting of our ignorance is the spur of life; and the consciousness of a secret to discover is the flavour of happiness, though the flavour is sometimes too bitter.

I. In nature we meet a secret to which we know we have no key. The feeling of that secret has been universal in man. It lies at the root of half of the religion and mythology of the world. It is the solution of that secret which we seek through life, which all art has sought incessantly. But we get no reply, except a reply half of pity, half of mockery. There is no face so full of the wild satire of secrecy as the face of nature.

II. Still more profound, still more mocking, though never so delightful, is the secret of humanity. There is a tragedy in it which is not in the secret of nature, and which makes our interest in it more passionate, more dreadful, more bitter, more absorbing. The existence of the secret precludes dull repose. It kindles an insatiable and noble curiosity; and wherever its pursuit is hottest, there is man most noble. When its excitement lessens or nearly dies, then we get what we call the dark ages, and man is base. But that never can last long; the secret of humanity springs up again to lure us after it: and the mark of all times when man has awakened into a new resurrection has been this, and this more than all things else: deep and wonderful interest in mankind, pursuit of the secrets of humanity.

III. What use is there in the secret? How can we retain its charm, and get its good, and purify ourselves from the fear, and anger, and sloth, and despair we know it creates in many? (1) Its use may lie in this: in the education which the excitement it creates gives to all our nature; in the way it awakens all our passions, all our intellect, all our spirit, and leads them through a tempest in which they are purified from their evil, in which, their excess being exhausted, calm and the tempered

balance of them become possible. (2) The answer to the second question is to do as the religious Greek did who threw himself on the eternal justice of God: to throw ourselves on the eternal love of a Father. To do that is to know that there must be a Divine and good end to all; to know that all which we see, however dark it be, is education; to know the victory of goodness, justice, and truth, and knowing it, to throw ourselves on that side, and to feel that in doing so we are chiming in with God and yielding our lives and will into His hand.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 161.

REFERENCES: viii.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 182; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 187.

Chap. ix., ver. 1.—"The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God."

THIS is the sober second thought of a wise man who has been sorely troubled in his mind by dwelling on the mysteries of Providence. His first hasty conclusion is one which is too often drawn from such observations; viz., that, inasmuch as Providence shows no special favour to the works of the righteous, it is scarcely worth one's while to trouble one's self about them. What is the use of flying so high and missing everything, when one might at least take life easy while it lasts, and enjoy its pleasures while he may? But though a doubter and sorely perplexed for the moment, he is no infidel. So long as he believes in God there is hope for him. The dark thoughts he has been thinking have all been connected with man and his work in time, the very best of which seems so often to come to such a lamentable end. But the darkness begins to disappear as soon as he allows his mind to rest on the thought of God and of His work in eternity, the end of which no man can see. Thus is the way prepared for that calm confidence expressed in the words before us.

I. The first thought suggested is the negative one that "the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God," and therefore withdrawn from the sight of men. It is of great importance for our peace of mind firmly to grasp the thought that we cannot at all infer what God thinks or intends concerning any person or his works from the outward circumstances we observe.

II. But there is a positive truth also in the words of the

text—"The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God"—not only in the sense that they are withdrawn from the sight of men, but in this far better sense: that they are safe. Being in the hand of God, they are in the best hand. The Lord knoweth them that are His; and is not that enough, though the onlooker from this side knoweth not?

III. Are you and your works in the hand of God? We know on the best authority that a man may belong to the righteous and not to the wise; he may himself be saved and yet his work be lost. Our work, as well as ourselves, must be built on Christ.

J. MONRO GIBSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 211.

REFERENCES: ix. 1-10.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 322; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 199. ix. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 64.

Chap. ix., ver. 4.—"A living dog is better than a dead lion."

THE lesson of the Preacher is an old one. While there is life there is hope, and only while there is life. Let us be up and doing, for the night cometh, in which no man can work. Our actual opportunities, small and trifling though they may seem, are, simply because they are still in our power, infinitely more valuable than even the greatest and noblest when once these have slipped from our grasp for ever. Consider the truth that in all things admitting of the distinction, things that can be said to be living and to be dead, it is life which gives the value, it is the earnestness and truth which underlie all real vital power that alone give significance and redeem from worthlessness; and that unless the angel be there to stir the waters, even the pool of Bethesda is but a stagnant pool, powerless and disappointing. It is thus both in nature and also in man, in the outer world which attracts and engages the senses and in the inner world of soul and spirit. It is the fresh life in both that we value, and justly.

I. The acquisition of knowledge—who that has not learnt it by experience can conceive its seductive charm for the student? Those misers of knowledge who have so devoted themselves to acquire that they have never learnt how to impart, nor even to arrange their own treasures for use, are but as children in comparison with those who in the cultivation of their intellect have never forgotten that, as living men, they must cultivate also the power of communicating their

living thought to others. The fresh life is there, and men acknowledge its value.

II. Even so is it with preaching. If a man will speak to my heart, he must not content himself with old forms of thought, however sacred, and the repetition of familiar, uncontested truths, however solemn. Let the preacher bring forth from his treasure-house things new as well as old.

III. So, too, is it, remarkably, with prayer. What the stricken heart requires is not merely the general prayer, however noble and solemn in itself, but that the soul of him that prays shall come forth to meet its own, shall throw itself into its feelings, and with fresh prayer—prayer fresh from the living fountain of the heart—shall ascend in few but earnest words to the throne of all grace.

IV. Is it not thus also in the world of thought and of opinion? If the tree of knowledge is to live, must we not expect that in time what is dead must be pushed off by living growth? Let us cling to that which is living and true, though only so long as its life and truth continue.

T. H. STEEL, *Sermons in Harrow Chapel*, p. 144.

REFERENCES: ix. 4.—A. J. Bray, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 17; F. Hastings, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 107. ix. 7.—*Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 312.

Chap. ix., vers. 7, 8.—"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment."

I. THIS is one of those passages, so remarkable in the writings of Solomon, in which the words of sinful men in the world are taken up by the Holy Ghost, to be applied in a Christian sense. As they stand in Ecclesiastes, it seems very plain that they are intended to represent the sayings and thoughts of sensual, careless people, indulging themselves in their profane ways, their utter neglect of God and goodness, with the notion that this world is all. But see the ever-watchful goodness and mercy of God. The words which the dissolute, wild-hearted sinner uses to encourage himself in his evil, inconsiderate ways He teaches us to take up, and use them in a very different sense: to express the inward joy and comfort which God's people may find in obeying Him. They are God's gracious word of permission to those who fear Him, encouraging them to enjoy with innocence, moderation, and thankfulness the

daily comforts and reliefs with which He so plentifully supplies them even in this imperfect world.

II. If Christians were at all such as they ought to be, these words might be well and profitably understood with a particular reference to this sacred season of Whitsuntide. This time is the last of the holy seasons; it represents to us the full completion of God's unspeakable plan for the salvation of the world. Supposing, then, any humble, faithful Christian to have rightly kept the former holy seasons, may we not without presumption imagine him to hear the voice of his approving conscience, the certain yet silent whispers of the Holy Comforter in his heart, "Go thy way now; receive the fulness of the blessing of these sacred days, which thou hast so dutifully tried to observe"?

III. "Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment." (1) This would be felt by the Christians of ancient times as peculiarly suitable to the holy season of Whitsuntide. For that was one of the solemn times of baptizing, and the newly-baptized were always clothed in white. To say, therefore, to Christians at Whitsuntide, "Let thy garments be always white," was the same as saying, "Take care that at no time you stain or sully the bright and clear robe of your Saviour's righteousness." (2) Oil is in Scripture the constant token of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Therefore to say, "Let thy head lack no ointment," would mean, "Take care that thou stir up, cherish, and improve the unspeakable gift of which thou art now made partaker. Use diligently all the means of grace which Christ has provided for thee in His kingdom, whereof thou art now come to be an inheritor."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vi., p. 117.

REFERENCES: ix. 7, 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 315. ix. 8.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 85.

Chap. ix., ver. 10.—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

"WHATSOEVER thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." What, then, is the work which we are placed here to do? Our work is to prepare for eternity. This brief, busy, passing life is the time of our probation, our trial whether we will be God's or not, and consequently whether we are to dwell with Him or be separated from Him for ever. The great work we have to do is

to serve God, which is, at the same time, to obtain the most real and stable enjoyment of which we are capable here and secure everlasting happiness hereafter. In one word, our great work is religion—our duty to God and man.

I. Take the duty of prayer, without which the life of religion droops and dies. Every day we have this to do. Do we do it with our might? Let us remember how important the duty is, and that they who are going to the grave, where there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, cannot afford to waste one day—it may be their last—the privilege of seeking the pardon and the grace without which their soul must die.

II. And so, too, of reading and hearing God's word. What a listless, spiritless thing is the study of the Bible to many of us! We open it unwillingly, as a task, not a privilege; we would rather read other books. Let us read and hear the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to us and teaching us His will and the way of our salvation. The Bible can never be a dull book to those who, whatever their hand findeth to do, do it with their might.

III. Consider the life within—the contest that is going on in every Christian's breast with the remains of his corrupt nature. How have you been waging this contest? We must fight the good fight, or we cannot receive the crown. We must take up the daily cross of the inner man, or we cannot be Christ's disciples. And therefore let us do it with our might.

IV. Let us ask whether we have done good to others as we ought. How very few ever take any trouble, make any sacrifice, use any personal exertion, for the temporal or spiritual good of others! "Whatsoever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might."

J. Jackson, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 692.

What the text bids us carry into life is, in one word, animation. Do all things with animation. As the old poet sang, "Let not your own kingdoms drowse in leaden dulness."

I. We hear it said sometimes that even wrong things done with energy give more hope of a character than goodness pursued without interest. This is of course not true; we can do no harm, however slight, without corrupting ourselves more than by the feeblest goodness. But that the thought should ever be expressed, and occur to one, as it sometimes will, when we pity the wretchedness of life without passion, is a witness of the unbounded power of animation within us and in the sphere of our action.

II. If ever you see the spirit of the world incarnate in one man, that man will tell you enthusiasm is a mistake. He would sum up for you the experiences of his life by telling you to dismiss zeal. It *is* the way to reach unscrupulous eminence for the individual, and it is the way to lay society in ashes. Not the evildoer himself does so much to destroy the relief, and the relative value, and the natural colouring of truth and of knowledge.

III. If you own the power of animation in other things, carry it energetically into the highest of all human acts: endeavour to be earnest and animated in your prayers to God. Let us try to be animated in prayer, and we shall be animated in life, and other lives will be the better for it. We cannot tell how, we cannot see the mystery, but we know that the life of God would flow down into us, and then from us, and would inspire and fill the life of man.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 103.

I. CONSIDER in what the danger consists against which we are here put on our guard. It appears upon the calmest consideration that the business of this world, even that which is most important and most necessary, considered only in itself and as belonging to this world, is in fact of small consequence, perhaps one might say, of none at all. Why, then, it may be asked, do people trouble themselves so much as they do about this world's goods, of which they must be of necessity soon deprived? The answer must be, Because, however sure it may be that they must be so soon deprived of these things, yet they do not think it sure; the hour of death, always uncertain, may be distant: and because it *may* be distant, we take for granted it must be. The best of us surely will confess that they have by no means done their duty "with all their might," but faintly, imperfectly, and indolently, as if they should have an opportunity for work, and device, and knowledge, and wisdom in the grave, whither they are going.

II. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Does not this plainly imply that we are expected to be very exact and particular about our behaviour hour after hour; in other words, that we are to be careful not merely to be doing right, but to be doing it with zeal, heartiness, and sincerity, and not as if we thought that God cared not how we served Him?

III. In the control and management of our tempers, especially under trying circumstances, the sacred word is addressed to us.

IV. Carelessness about religious truth is a sign of want of love for God. No person can be indifferent about such a subject without great danger. To this also the heavenly warning seems to be especially applicable. Think nó labour or cost too great by which you may find out where the truth lies, and by what means you may be preserved in it steadfast to the end.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 53.

THE text divides itself into three heads:—

I. What we are to do. The Preacher says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it." No one will be excused for remaining idle through life, for there are some things which our hand "findeth to do" in every stage of life. Unity of purpose and design is a great secret of success. Another, scarcely of less importance, is patience. If we are to imitate our Lord in His activity when once entered upon His ministry, we are bound no less to imitate Him in His repose, in that calm attitude which belongs to conscious strength, and to avoid that restless, bustling activity which seeks to do work which our hand does not find, which labours at the wrong time, and therefore without effect. There is no true greatness in man where this patience is wanting.

II. How we are to do it. The text says, "Do it with thy might." Whatever may be our powers, be they great or small, they are to be exerted to the full. All labour is useless wherein the hand alone works. Every work needs attention. It may call for the exercise of very few faculties of the mind, but these cannot be dispensed with.

III. Consider the reason. Why are we to do it? "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Succeeding periods are the graves of the past. You use your time or you waste it; you come out of a trial stronger or feebler; habits of industry or indolence are strengthened according as you do the work your hand finds to do or neglect it.

G. BUTLER, *Sermons in Cheltenham College Chapel*, p. 103.

Chap. ix., ver. 10, with Col. iii., ver. 23.

TO-DAY I would speak of our daily business; and I have chosen two texts because in them we see, compared and contrasted, the teachings on this subject, first, of the philosophy which, for the moment at any rate, is confined to this life, and, next, of the Gospel of Him who holds the keys of this world and of the next.

How infinite is the contrast between the cheerful and hopeful spirit of the second text and the earnest sadness of the book of Ecclesiastes.

I. The business of life is not regarded as that which our hand simply "finds to do" by chance or by choice. It is that in which we "serve the Lord"—that which He has set us to do, and for which He will give us the reward. St. Paul elsewhere speaks of men as being "fellow-workers with God" in carrying out the eternal law of that dispensation which He has been pleased to ordain in relation to His creatures. All of us, whether we know it or not, in some sense whether we will or not, "serve the Lord."

II. When we speak of the Lord here, we evidently mean the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely God, but God made man, Himself at once the Lord of lords and the chief of servants. The Lord whom we serve is not One who says simply, "Believe in Me and obey Me," but One who says, "Follow Me." There is a peculiar instructiveness and beauty in the very fact that for many years of His earthly life, in humble preparation for His higher ministry, our Lord Himself was pleased to have an occupation or business, and help, we must suppose, to win the bread of the carpenter's home in Nazareth.

III. Christianity neither forbids nor discourages business. But what it must do is to give to it greater purity, greater energy, greater peace, greater harmony with the growth in us of a true humanity.

BISHOP BARRY, *Sermons at Westminster Abbey*, p. 35.

I. "WHATSOEVER thy hand findeth to do." The warning is not addressed to utter idlers, to that "sluggard" who is so often the object of the wise king's almost contemptuous admonition. It assumes that men have found something to do, some real interest. It urges them to carry out this in good earnest, to throw themselves into it, to put their heart into it.

II. The temptation for us all, young or old, is not to throw our heart into our work, not to do it "with our might." (1) There is the temptation to think that it does not after all very much matter; that, do what we will, all will be much the same as it has hitherto continued. Solomon felt these benumbing influences with a force which a smaller nature could not have felt, and yet he could deliberately urge as the result of his experience, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with

thy might." (2) We think that we are not well fitted for that work which our hand has been compelled to find to do. All that God requires is that we should do our best. He does not need our works; but He does need—let us reverently say it—that we should do our best in every work with which our hands are busied. (3) If we ask ourselves why it is that we are in general so little in earnest in our work, conscience at once replies that it is because we allow some trifle to distract our thoughts.

III. Think what would be the case if we did with our might whatever our hand found to do. The might of the weakest is so marvellously strong. It is the sustained, hearty effort which leads to great results.

IV. The maxim of Solomon is based upon a melancholy motive. The Christian has a happier motive for exertion; but from one motive or another, exertion, sustained and hearty, must be forthcoming. (1) With thy might, because the time is short, because the night cometh, when no man can work. (2) With thy might, because the Lord Jesus is looking on, and smiling approval on, every earnest, humble effort. (3) With thy might, because the harvest is infinite, and the labourers are miserably few. (4) With thy might, because the Lord of the harvest condescends to expect much even from thee.

H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 398.

The substance of these texts is the duty of earnest and hearty working, the duty of doing with all our might and with all our heart whatever work God lays to our hand. It has to do with:—

I. School-work. There is no way of being a scholar but by working for it. It is harder for some than for others, but in every case it is work. In the case of young people it is peculiarly the work which "their hand findeth to do"—the work which God gives them, as His work as well as theirs. Regarding this school-work, the command is, "Do it with thy might."

II. Home-work. This runs alongside of the other. The home-work is an important part of the training for after-life. Here, too, the right-hearted will recognise the duty, "Do it heartily, as unto the Lord."

III. Business-work. When school-days are over, we are in the habit of speaking of "beginning to work." Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well; and however humble the

work is, it is each one's duty to do it as well as it can be done. It is often when people are busy at their work that the Lord comes to them in the way of blessing.

IV. Soul-work. This is rather a work to be wrought for us than by us. But then we must be in earnest about it. Here again the Lord says, "Do it with thy might."

V. Christian work. What is required of us is just that we should do what we can. The question whether that be little or much need not concern us.

J. H. WILSON, *The Gospel and its Fruits*, p. 289.

REFERENCES: ix. 10.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 62, and vol. v., p. 1; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 259, and vol. xix., No. 1119; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 331; J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 1; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines of Sermons for Parochial Use*, 2nd series, p. 192; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 5, and vol. xxiii., p. 4; J. Kelly, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 6; J. B. Heard, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 120; Canon Barry, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 216.

Chap. ix., ver. 11.—"The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

I. LIFE reigns in all the worlds, however powerful the hindrances to life at times may be. The real work of the world is not done by the swift or the strong, but by the multitudinous, universal push of humble, irrepressible life. Light and sunbeams, and rain and dews, call gently to the hidden life; and life, shy and tender, peeps forth at the call, and comes out conquering and irresistible, clothing with grass a thousand hills, making hill and plain alike to live. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

II. And is this truth less true in the world of men? That world also has its armies, its philosophies, its powers that shake and destroy, great to hear and great to see. But the violent passions, the famous outbreaks, the upheavals—what do they do? They shatter the nations; they break in fragments, it may be, half a world; a fear comes on mankind, and many fall down and worship. But wait a little, wait, and all is still: and ruined homes, and graves, and barren lands are all that is left of the glory and the noise, till by degrees life comes back, now here, now there, a little tentative shoot, as it were, a stir, a movement; a delicate tendril of loving work revives; a patch begins to be cultivated; and by degrees a new creation rises, a subtle web of woven life veils and covers the rents, and ruins, and sharpnesses, and sorrows, and crimes that witness to

destroying force, and life is lord of all again, for "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

III. This parable leads us step by step to Him the King of life, Christ Jesus. His life alone was the one only almightiness which by living and being sacrificed re-created a lost world. For "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." In the midst of conquering armies, imperial pomp, wealth, majesty, kings, and throngs of men, a little Infant in a manger is life. Life, conquering, supreme, Divine, was on earth as a Babe, as a Child, as a lonely Man. And we have a sure faith that nothing living, truly living, ever dies. We know in Christ that there is a life here which is of Christ and will not die.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 138.

REFERENCES: ix. 11-18.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 344; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 213.

Chap. ix., ver. 12.—"For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

I. THERE are many cases in which to our weak eyes the love of God is apparently most questionable, in which men and women seem absolutely abandoned to tyrannous circumstances, to the wicked wills of others, to their own weakness, without a grain of help being afforded them. This is one of the torturing religious problems; and though I believe there is an answer to it, I do not say that we have found it yet. Some light may be thrown on the matter when we think of a Divine Father of men, revealed as the Redeemer in Jesus Christ of the whole race from evil. Only we must add to the ordinary theological conception the assertion that the fate of no one is decided in this world, that our short space of thirty or sixty years is but a moment in the long education which God is giving to every soul, and that the end of that education is inevitable good, never inevitable evil. If that be true, we can look with some hope upon the problem of these victims.

II. But on the whole the cases in which we can clearly say men and women are victims are exceptional ones, and the wisest thing to do is never in practical life to assume that any are victims. That they exist is plain; but we have no right to say to any one till his death that he cannot get rid of weakness, much less to assume that we cannot do so ourselves. Our tendency, indeed,

is to give way, to throw the reins on the neck of our fancies, our passions, and our appetites, and let them carry us where they will; but the very definition of a man is one who is born to subdue the tendency to give way to every impulse, and to make his qualities tend towards right and noble things. Not to strive to fulfil this is to cease to be a man. Our true life is found in resistance in its pain, and afterwards in its sublime and victorious joy.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 178.

REFERENCE: ix. 13-18.—J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 181.

Chap. ix., vers. 14-18.—"There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it," etc.

I. THE little city. At first sight it may seem rather paradoxical to compare this great world of ours, with its almost innumerable inhabitants, its vast area, its enormous resources, to the little city with few men within it. But do we not, comparatively speaking, take too exalted a view of this little world? For relatively little it is after all, but an insignificant fraction of God's great universe. We know nothing of the circumstances to which the little city owed its danger—it may or may not have been its own fault—but we do know the cause of the peril in which the human family has been involved, and that the blame lies entirely with ourselves. We have forced God into the position of a foe, although He is in His heart our best and truest Friend.

II. The great king. Whom are we to see represented by the great king—an angry God about to inflict judgment or a malignant spirit of evil assailing the human heart with his temptations? The sad and terrible truth is that we need not be at any pains to answer this question, for in one point God and Satan are at one, and that is in the recognition of the demands of justice against the sinner. Satan, from this point of view, is but the executioner of the Divine decree, and obtains his power over us in virtue of the sanctions of the broken Law. Satan is only to be feared when his assaults are backed by the law of God.

III. The poor wise man. Our Wise Man, Himself the innocent, offered Himself, with a wisdom which was the child of love, that the guilt of our city might first be imputed to Him the innocent, and that His innocence might be imputed to

our city, so that by His voluntary self-sacrifice one man might die for the city, and the city itself might be safe.

W. HAY AITKEN, *Newness of Life*, p. 72.

REFERENCES: ix. 14, 15.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 95. ix. 18.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 538; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 47. ix.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 211. x. 1.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 10; J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 169. x. 1-20.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 363. x. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 140. x. 8.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 345; H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 90. x. 9.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 324.

Chap. x., ver. 10—chap. xii., ver. 1.

I. IN chap. xi. Koheleth urges upon us the necessity of diligence. He has come to the conclusion that it is not worth while to have a nicely calculated scheme of life, because at every turn our calculations may be upset by the interference of an arbitrary Providence. But, on the other hand, as he now points out, we must do *something*, or we shall have no enjoyment at all. We shall never reap if we do not sow. We must be ready even to throw away our labour, to "cast our bread upon the waters."

II. In the third and following verses, he warns us against being misled by a doctrine on which he has previously much insisted; the doctrine, viz., that we never know what God is going to do with us. We must do what we have to do in spite of our short-sightedness. It is worth while to be diligent *on the chance* that our diligence may be rewarded. Young man, says Koheleth, enjoy yourself in your youth. Make the most of that golden season. "Walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes." Only you must remember not to overdo it. God always punishes excess. In old age you will reap what you have previously sown. Remember, therefore, thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Bethink you, before it is too late, of those natural laws which cannot be broken with impunity.

III. Notice the contrast between this worldly philosophy of Koheleth's and the Jewish religion at its best. The precept which he here enunciates is distinctly contrary to one which we find in the Pentateuch (Num. xv. 39). There we read, "Seek *not* after your own heart and your own eyes; but remember to do all the commandments of the Lord and be

holy unto your God" According to Judaism, God, righteousness, holiness, character, stand first; and to them our personal inclinations must be altogether subordinated. According to Koheleth, pleasure stands first. God is introduced only as an after thought or a check. Communion with God was felt by the really pious Jew to be the supreme happiness of life; but according to Koheleth, God is to be obeyed merely because He will punish disobedience. True morality is devotion of the soul to goodness; true religion is the devotion of the soul to God—devotion that is not increased by the hope of profit nor diminished by the certainty of loss. If we would be true to the manhood with which we have been endowed, we too must cultivate this spirit of self-abandoning devotion to goodness and to God. A. W. MOMERIE, *Agnosticism*, p. 266.

REFERENCES: x. 16.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 123. x.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 234; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 227.

Chap. xi., ver. 1.—"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

THIS text is generally regarded as an exhortation to charity, in that restricted sense of the word in which it is equivalent to almsgiving. But it is plainly capable of a far wider extension. It represents by a very striking figure the duties and the consequent hopes of every one of us in every one of our relations towards God and towards man.

I. The text teaches the lesson of obedience to present duty and of patience as to the future result. There is a sowing which is done by each one of us for himself: a sowing to the flesh or else a sowing to the Spirit; and according as our sowing is of the one kind or the other, so will our harvest be one of happiness or of misery. Now we can all understand that to sow to the Spirit is a thing which requires great patience. If we look only at the immediate result, we must be disappointed. It is only "after many days"—"in due season," as St. Paul expresses the same thought—that we shall reap if we faint not.

II. One great part of this sowing to the Spirit consists in our conduct towards God, the other in our conduct towards one another. (1) Suppose that one of you sets himself heartily to seek God. God never led you to expect that a few hours' or a few days' anxiety would set at rest for ever your prospect of

salvation. He bids you seek Him, and He assures you that in due time He will be found of you. He bids you trust in His guidance, even when He is unseen. Let your comfort be in every time of hope deferred the animating and stirring exhortation on which we have dwelt: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." (2) Withhold not the word that aims at a brother's good. It may well be spoken humbly, cautiously, reluctantly, gently; if not, it will lose its influence, and will be wrong in you. You may believe to the very end that it was all in vain; and yet in the sight of a God who sees the heart that one word may have been the turning-point for an immortal soul between life and death. Infinite will be the joy hereafter of having been instrumental but partially, but remotely, in the salvation of but one soul. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 509.

I. THE charge is, "Cast thy bread upon the waters." (1) Its first reference is to seed, for this is what is meant by "bread." "The seed is the word of God." Only from the lips of Christ and from those whose utterances were instinct with the light of Christ's own Spirit do we obtain those gleanings of precious and suggestive thought which God will vitalise and make the seeds of heaven. (2) A second reference in the charge is to the sowing: "Cast" the seed. Weeds are self-dispersive, and have a frightful facility of growth; but fruits are God's blessing on labour. The winds of circumstance may float and scatter the thistledown of sin; but the hand of intelligence and piety must sow the seed of truth. (3) The third reference is to the place where the seed is to be cast: "Cast it upon the waters." As the seeds fell on the soft and porous soil beneath the water, your hints may drop into yielding and receptive natures.

II. The promise: "Thou shalt find it after many days." "Thou shalt find it;" therefore you may be at first inclined to think it lost. "After many days;" therefore you need not be strengthless with the chill of discouragement if it should not be found at once. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." It must pass through the action of some kind of mental chemistry; it must mix with other influences; it must long unfurl and ramify in mystery and silence: and you are not to faint because you are unable to reap in sowing-time.

III. What effects should this charge and this promise have on our faith and practice? (1) We must aim to sow the right seed. The right seed appears to be this alone: teaching in its history and its connections the fact that "Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners." (2) We should aim at the best way of teaching. (3) We should aim to look to the right quarter for success. (4) We should aim to use the right rule for estimating success. (5) Let us aim to obey this message from God in our daily sphere of life.

C. STANFORD, *Central Truths*, p. 315.

REFERENCES: xi. 1.—*New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 271; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 351; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 199; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 343; J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 197. xi. 1-6.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 391; T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 239. xi. 1-10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 222.

Chap. xi., ver. 3.—"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."

I. IN the first proverb in chap. xi.—"Cast thy bread upon the waters," etc.—do we not see, no less than in the parable of the sower, the common work of man as a tiller of the ground turned into the symbol and token of his life as an heir of God's kingdom? The words of the Preacher say to each man in the common daily tasks in which his life is spent, to each in his vocation and ministry, Do that which is right and true always; let acts of kindness be scattered freely. The seed never fails of fruit somewhere or at some time. The harvest may be a long way off, yet after many days *thou* shalt find.

II. The next verse gives in part the interpretation of the parable, in part presents a new one. "Give a portion to seven;" yes, and if an eighth appear at thy gate, send him not away empty: let him be a welcome guest to thee. Do good not according to the measure which thou appointest to thyself, but to the opportunities that God gives thee.

III. The text is in perfect harmony with this teaching. Before, there was the earnest call to well-doing; here the man who would use his life rightly and be what God meant him to be is warned against the perils of the overanxious, over-reflective temper. All the great thinkers of the world tell us, as with one voice, that the future which God appoints will come, for good or evil, joy or sorrow; that it is unwise in

any man to anticipate the worst. Let him do the right thing at the present hour, and then he has done all that in him lies to make his path clear, and he may leave the rest to God. No temper is more fatal to energy, manliness, usefulness, than this of anxiety and fear.

E. H. PLUMPTRE, *King's College Sermons*, p. 40.

REFERENCES: xi. 3.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii., p. 189. xi. 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 292; H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 163. xi. 5, 11.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 55.

Chap. xi., ver. 6.—"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

THIS text lays a general command upon us all that each in his vocation and calling should, as part of the work of every day, watch for and make use of every possible opportunity of helping those around him in the way to godliness, and, like St. Andrew in the early times of the Gospel, of bringing his brother to Jesus.

I. There are no such things as trifles in the life of a Christian. What we call trivial occasions are the very occasions which the precepts and examples of Scripture would have us turn to account. We must carry our religion about with us, so that its light shall be always shining before men, in such sort as that they shall see it sanctifying our business, and hallowing our pleasures, and pervading our whole character. God's law is not to be "hidden," not to be "far off;" but it is to be kept very nigh, "in thy mouth and in thy heart." So ran the command; and the reason of the injunction was added: "in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

II. Jesus Christ never missed an opportunity. He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. Men might hear Him gladly, or they might walk no more with Him; they might hear, or they might forbear: but He was so on the watch to draw them to Him that no chance was lost. The more we shrink from trying to lead others to good, the less we are like Christ.

F. E. PAGET, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 85.

REFERENCES: xi. 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 276; Parker, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 10; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 266.

Chap. xi., ver. 7,—"Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

I. GOOD-TEMPER is the result of a well-ordered character, in which each quality is so tempered as to act well with the rest, and to minister to the rightful and easy activity of the whole. It may be born with a man in whom the elements are kindly mixed; but for the most part it has to be won. And we can only win it by daily sacrifice of the impulsive, impertinent, and selfish demands of our different qualities, appetites, and passions to be first. If we work at this quietly, we shall get our character into harmony; and the result of that is good-temper, sunlight in heart and home.

II. There is another thing which goes with good-temper. It is that freedom is given to each member of the house to grow and express their growth in acts and words, freedom within the limits necessary for the pleasure and good of the rest. We are bound not only to prefer one another, but also to prefer them "in honour:" that is, to try and find out what each in the household does best, and therefore enjoys most; to find out in doing what things they will most shine and delight others, and to help them towards these things; to suppress ourselves in order that we may be able to make others appear in honour, and be better liked, reverenced, and loved by ourselves and all. This is true courtesy. It is its very flower; it is the essence of Christ's teaching set to music in daily life.

III. If you would have sunlight in your home, see that you have work in it, that you work yourself and set others to work. Nothing makes moroseness and heavy-heartedness in a house so fast as idleness. What said Christ? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Sunlight comes with work.

IV. The same results that follow sunshine in nature follow its moral image in a home. In such a home there is: (1) light; we see things as they are, and in their right relations. (2) Colour. The smallest flower shines, and enjoys, and expands in sunlight; the smallest child gives forth its special colour, and scent, and charm, and good in a home which is warm and bright with love.

This is the picture and these are the causes of a sunny home. Truly its light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold its sun. The light that lights it is the same light that enlightens the life of God. His sunlight is love

and work; and if we would abide with Him, we must love and we must work.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 204.

REFERENCE: xi. 7.—F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 214.

Chap. xi., vers. 7, 8.

To most men there is something very hopeless about these words, a hopelessness with which too many of us are familiar. The tone is like that of some clever, old, hardened, unloving man of the world, who says to the young, and the aspiring, and the sanguine, "Ah, it is all very well, hope, and romance, and doing wonders, like infantine diseases a painful necessity; you will soon grow out of them. There is nothing worth caring for very much; and you will soon be old and done for, and then the grave. Vanity of vanities!" This is indeed a gospel of despair. I do not think it is good teaching for the young; and more still, I do not think its prophecies need to be fulfilled. To a large extent we may decide what our old age may be.

I. "Truly the light is sweet." Yes, to those who have once known what it is, otherwise not. For in practical life, whether we deal with the realm of faith or of morals, we still find men contented dwellers in the darkness. They go on in life with the morals and the religion of their class, with a morality and religion deeply unintelligent. They go on with the work of life, and a Sunday church if quite convenient; and they reach their ambition; and they place their children; and life thins off to the end; and they are dull and drowsy, for the night is spreading over them, and they have had no religious intention to be the light of their light.

II. As in the matter of faith and opinion we need at least one interpretative principle to make us know where we are, so in practice we need one definite intention if the gloom of practical irreligion is to be driven away. That which strikes one in the phenomenon of conversion, wherever it occur, as universally present, is the concentration of the mind to one point, and the new force which comes of the concentration. A man ceases to wander aimlessly in a fog, scarcely hoping to get anywhere, unless it be to heaven when he no longer can be here—get to heaven by unintentionally stumbling into it in the dark. He now knows what he means, he now sees his object, and the path lies straight before him. And so we say that a man has "found peace;" and his character grows strong; and the consistent, well-knit life manifests the workings of a grace Divine.

III. But if men choose darkness rather than light in the matter of religious practice, equally true is it that they do so in the matter of religious faith and thought. The attitude of most men towards a new thought or a new side of an old thought is that of impatience and repugnance; they will not bear to hear it expressed and explained, but drown it in cries more forcible than intelligent. "This man speaketh blasphemy," said men of Christ; and to many a voice of God the same response has been made.

IV. From Christ we learn a rule of life, and that rule is conscientiousness. And from Christ we gain a saving light of faith for these dark days; and it is that "God is good, and His mercy endureth for ever." This light is sweeter and better far than the cynicism of disappointed age; it is a light for youth in its gladness, and for the strong man in the plenitude of his powers, and it is indeed a saving light as we feel our way to the sanctuary of the tomb.

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Law and God*, p. 52.

Chap. xi., vers. 7-9.

I. NOTICE the reality of the contrasts presented in life. Full as life is of pathetic meanings, we are often strangely insensible to them. We may not regard them with indifference, but we fail to realise them. Life is made up of the endless play and vicissitude of circumstance, often rising into a tragic pathos. Men and women are apt to be engrossed with their own little share of life. They are unable to conceive life as a whole even in their own case, its breadth of shadow as well as of light, or how the one is meant to fit into the other, and harmonise the whole to a higher meaning than it would otherwise have. They are content with the passing hour, especially if it be an hour of enjoyment. They feel that the light is sweet, and that it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun; and beyond this their thoughts do not carry them. It is needless to say that this is an essentially irreligious frame of mind, barely a rational one. The Preacher warns us to look ever from the present to the future, from the light to the darkness, and even from the opening portals of life to a judgment to come.

II. And this points to the second and still higher view of life suggested in the text. It is not merely full of vicissitudes which should always awaken reflectiveness; but below all its vicissitudes, and behind all its joys and sorrows alike, there

lies a law of retribution which is always fulfilling itself. It is only when we rise to this view of life that we rise to a truly moral or religious view of it. We must realise that all the moments of life have a Divine meaning, that they are linked together by spiritual law, and are designed to constitute a spiritual education for a higher sphere. This is the true interpretation of the judgment which God has everywhere set up against life, and especially against its festive moments, as the most dangerous and self-absorbing. The light is acknowledged to be good, and life pleasant. The young man is acknowledged in his natural freedom. His heart is allowed to cheer him in the days of his youth, and he may walk in the ways of his heart and the sight of his eyes. Life is good and to be enjoyed; yet it is always grave, and the account is always running up against it. The true view is at once earnest and genial, bright yet always thoughtful, looking to the end from the beginning and forecasting the future, yet without anxiety, in the experience of the present.

J. TULLOCH, *Some Facts of Religion and of Life*, p. 232.

REFERENCE: xi. 7-10.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 407.

Chap. xi., ver. 9 (with Phil. iv., ver. 4).—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth."

WE may accept these words as in very deed the counsel of the Preacher, as embodying the wisdom which he had learned from God. As such they assert a truth in which all of us, whether young or old, have some share.

I. They tell those who are called to the work of teaching or of guiding youth that all systems of education which tend to repress or coerce its natural elasticity are at variance with the Divine order as well as with man's nature.

II. Again, I read in the Preacher's words a warning against a fault into which as we advance in life we are all liable to fall. We allow the cares and anxieties of middle age to possess us wholly; we are careful and troubled about many things. The grave responsibilities of duty or the eager striving after wealth are dominant in us; and we lose our capacity for enjoyment, and become intolerant of the overflowing life of joy which for us has passed away. And so we lose the blessings which God designed for us in making youth the season of enjoyment and clothing it with so much grace and brightness.

III. But the chief lesson of the words is for those to whom

they are addressed. The young man is told that he is to rejoice in his youth. That is God's gift to him; and he should neither reject it by yielding to dark, sullen, moody thoughts, nor waste it in thoughtless profusion, nor defile it by acts of sin.

IV. There are, however, memorable words that accompany this counsel—words which have sometimes been allowed to darken and overshadow it, but which we must not on that account ignore: "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." That cheerfulness and joy of thine does not exempt thee from the great law of retribution which runs through the whole order of man's life. These words are designed to regulate and purify that which, in the absence of that remembrance, so soon overpasses its right bounds and becomes tainted with evil.

E. H. PLUMPTRE, *King's College Sermons*, p. 1.

Chap. xi., ver. 9.—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

WAS this a strain of savage irony? Was it the mocking wail of one who had done all these things in the very worst sense you can put upon them, and found out, in unspeakable bitterness of heart, what came of it all? Looking before the text and after it, thinking of the general scope and tendency of the whole book of Ecclesiastes, one would say that all the text conveys is this great truth, which we all find out as we grow older, that the reckoning always comes. There is no harm in rejoicing in hopeful youth; God made youth for that. Only remember for steadying and sobering, not for saddening, that the reckoning will come; that through all these things you are sowing, and that you will reap by-and-bye.

I. Solomon was right in this sense, that for all enjoyment, ay, for all you do, for hard work, and privation, and trial too, the reckoning comes, the painful reckoning; for all these things God will bring you into judgment as for the enjoyments of your early days: and the reckoning may be a very heavy one. Even where the present frost is not the direct outcome of the past sunshine, no more sorrowful experience can be known by any human heart than the awful blankness which is expressed by the one word "gone." To have had and to have lost—that is Solomon's *judgment* in the text.

II. But you will not escape the reckoning, go which way you may. Rejoice or not rejoice, God will bring you into judgment. We must through much tribulation enter into what home soever we may reach at the last. The text does but tell us that the troubles tend to increase towards the journey's end. There is but one choice we can make, and be sure we shall never repent; it is the choice of Christ, the choice of life and good in Him. Make that choice. As for every other choice you make, you will have to enter into judgment for it. But this will abide the trial of that great day.

A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 1.

I. THERE are perhaps two senses in which a portion of these words might be understood. (1) It may mean that youth is the appointed season of joy and gladness, and that God will have it made so. It may say, Rejoice, O young man—for it is God's will—in the days of thy youth. Only remember, amidst thy mirth and gladness, that coming judgment which will one day take account of all. (2) Or the sense may be not so much in the spirit of encouragement as of warning. If thou rejoice in thy youth so as to resign thyself without check or reserve to its pleasures, then know thou that, bright as earth may seem to thee, full of joys and tolerant of forgetfulness, yet in due time for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

II. Each of these interpretations has a just and true meaning. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth." God will have it so. If youth were not a season of joy, of few cares and abounding pleasures, who would live to old age? nay, who would be fit for the burden and heat of life's middle day? Rejoice then while you may. But if thou wilt forget God and enshrine thyself in the sanctuary which was built and furnished for Him, then take with thee this thought, to be thy counsellor if thou wilt, thy scourge if thou wilt not: that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment; and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 523.

WHAT is the Christian application of the words, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth"?

I. They may warn those who have the care of youth not to lay too much on the young. Sadden not the hearts which God would not make sad. Let there be at least one period of life on

which the memory may rest hereafter gladly, a fountain from which the heart may perpetually renew its faith that unalloyed happiness is not unattainable.

II. Let the young believe, what all experience shows, that it is possible to rejoice in youth and at the same time to remember judgment. For pleasure is not life, but the reflex and incidental evidence to us of the life that is there. And while there are most certainly springs of gladness, which may prove hereafter to be the means of enriching life, let the heart which thinks it can discern such blessings be very careful in the use of them. How much may depend on the strength or weakness shown in this, the experienced alone can tell.

III. Let the young rejoice in youth, for it is the beginning of all things; it has possibilities which may well seem infinite. The strain, the conflict, the dust and strife, the heat and burden of the day, are to come afterwards; meanwhile the young are gathering strength in abundant leisure, that in the evil day they may be able to stand. Let us see that it is strength that they are gathering, and not weakness, and then we will not grudge them the brightness of moments which we can never know again.

IV. Let not the young be too ready to imagine that they are able to stand alone and to be a law unto themselves. It is one of the purest sources of joy in youth that it has the power of leaning upon an example, of looking up with reverence to another. It has the belief in human goodness unimpaired. It would be a sad thing if the disintegration of society were to proceed so far, that even this feeling should lose its freshness.

V. It would be wrong to forget that there are some to whom youth is not a time of joy, to whom their first severe trials come at a time when they are least able to bear them, a time when to feel sorrow is to think it impossible ever to smile again. It would be mockery to teach them to rejoice, perhaps even to speak to them of joy. But in fact life is full of compensations; and though the traces of early sorrow may long remain, yet it may have opened depths within them which long afterwards may become a source of truest blessing.

L. CAMPBELL, *Some Aspects of the Christian Ideal*, p. 134.

WE interpret this verse as a simple precept, containing no irony, nor bitterness, nor threatening, but merely an injunction to Christian joy in youth—Christian joy in youth limited, tested, and directed by the prospect of judgment. When we turn to St. Paul to know the principles on which we are to make our

rejoicing a Christian one, we find that in the passages in which he urges the duty of rejoicing he puts forward two principal reasons of joy. The one is in the Epistle to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord;" and the other in the Epistle to the Romans: "Rejoicing in hope." Consider how these grounds of Christian rejoicing affect the young.

I. "Rejoice in the Lord." The familiar phrase "in the Lord" is one which really contains very deep and solemn meaning. It signifies that Christians are, in some signal and mysterious manner, "in Christ." Being in Him, they must stand fast in Him; being in Him, they are alike in Him, whether they are alive on the earth, standing fast in Him, or whether they sleep in Him. In Him they thank God acceptably; in Him it is their life to be. We then are in Christ, and St. Paul tells us that we are to rejoice therein: "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice;" "Rejoice that ye are in the Lord, and being in the Lord, rejoice." This rejoicing belongs to the young Christian as fully as to the old. If he has not yet had the time or opportunity for great advances towards Christian perfection, at least he is less far removed from the days of his baptismal innocence. Grace is yet unclouded by inveterate sin. His heart is still open to the freshness of early lessons, to the depth of first impressions, to the heartiness of childish duty. Thus he may rejoice in his youth, and let his heart naturally cheer him in the days of his youth.

II. "Rejoicing in hope." The hopes which are the ground of Christian joy are: (1) the hope that our present state of privilege and blessing "in the Lord" shall continue to us while we live, and (2) that in the final judgment we shall be received to the fulness of that inheritance of which we are heirs already. Hope might almost be called the natural privilege of youth. The loving and happy Christian hope often shines as brightly in infant and youthful hearts as even in mature and aged saints. If it be less of a deliberate and reflective feeling, it is more spontaneous and simple, insomuch that many a child who has been early trained to know God, His constant presence, His power, and His love, leans upon Him and trusts Him with the same unhesitating hope and cheerful confidence with which he trusts his earthly parents.

G. MOBERLY, *Sermons at Winchester College*, p. 209.

REFERENCES: xi. 9.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 89; G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 105; W.

Spensley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 20; J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 97. xi. 9, 10.—R. Dixon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 631; B. Jowett, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 204; J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 406. xi.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 263. xi., xii.—G. G. Bradley, *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 123.

Chap. xii., ver. 1.—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

I. THERE are certain characters which in youth lose part of their youth. Something has stepped in which has spoilt life. These characters after repression, and when the time of youth is past, grow young again. Existence is transfigured. The soul is gifted with new powers, and the heart with a wealth of new feelings. They cannot help making experiments with all these new instruments. Every day is delightful, for every day there is something fresh to be tried; and the life of living seems inexhaustible. Naturally there is a dissipation of powers, a want of concentration, a want of foresight; and these things, coming in the midst of manhood or womanhood, are dangerous to progress. These characters want concentration of will towards a single and a noble aim. There is but one such aim on earth, and it is that of being like God. Concentrate, then, your will on this. Do not wish, but will, to be at one with God. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find."

II. The second case I speak of is of characters which, passing into manhood and womanhood, retain for many years the elements of youth. This differs from the first inasmuch as youth has not been repressed, but previously enjoyed. As the chief danger of the former is dissipation of character, the chief danger of the latter lies in overfervency of character. What we want in this case is not the rooting out of youthful enthusiasm, but its direction. Endeavour to make your enthusiasm self-restrained. Begin to win the power of will over enthusiasm in the sphere of your spiritual life. Power of will comes to man when he claims and makes by faith the will of God his own. Power of self-restraint is gained when a man so loves the perfection of Christ that he cannot allow himself to run into every excitement. He stops and asks himself, "Would my Master have done this? would He have smiled upon it?"

III. The third case is that of characters who pass steadily from youth to manhood, leaving their youth behind them. Their tendency, since they have no youthfulness to complicate

their nature, is to become men of one dominant idea, to let their particular business or profession absorb all the energies of their nature into itself, so that one portion of their character is especially developed and the others left untrained. They become in this way incomplete men. Educate all your being, for being devoid of the ardour of youth, and believing in steady work, you are in danger of becoming a one-sided man. Let your effort be to be manifold and many-sided, while you cling fast to your particular work. This is our Christian duty. For Christ came to save the whole of our nature, to present us at the end, body, soul, and spirit, perfect to His Father.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 335.

I. WHAT is it to remember God? It is, in the figurative language of the Old Testament Scriptures, to walk with God; to set the Lord always before our face; to dwell in the secret place of the Most High; to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. It is to have the thought of God constantly present to us, keeping us watchful, humble, contented, diligent, pure, peaceable.

II. Why should we thus remember God? "Remember now *thy Creator* in the days of thy youth." The service to which we are called is a reasonable service. He who made us has a right to us. And let us be quite sure that in resisting His call, in fighting against the demands of our Creator, we must be on the losing side; it must be our ruin; it must be our misery.

III. "Remember thy Creator *in the days of thy youth.*" We can discern the main reasons for this urgency. (1) First, because the days of youth are happy days. As yet you have something to offer which will do God honour; and if you wait till youth is gone, you withhold from Him that acceptable sacrifice. (2) The days of thy youth are vigorous days. The work of remembering God is easier in early than in later life. If you waste this precious time, soon will the evil days come: days of unceasing toil; days of dissipating pleasure; days of bitter disappointment; days of overpowering temptation; days of rooted habits, of deep spiritual slumber. Remember then thy Creator now, while the evil days come not.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 305.

REFERENCES: xii. 1.—*New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 21; *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 3rd series,

p. 253; J. W. Colenso, *Village Sermons*, p. 72; R. Newton, *Bible Warnings*, p. 9; J. P. Chown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 282. xii. 1-7.—J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 215; J. Bennet, *The Wisdom of the King*, p. 382. xii. 1-8.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 407; J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 114. xii. 1-14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 222.

Chap. xii., ver. 5.—"Man goeth to his long home."

It is not at his death only that it may be said of any man, "He goeth to his long home." It is a continual present tense. Every moment, every step he takes, he is always on the road, getting nearer and nearer.

I. Eternity is an abyss in which the mind loses itself in a moment; and the more we try to realise, the more impossible it grows. And because we have never seen it or conceived it, we call some earthly thing, some work, some waiting-time, some sorrow, some suffering, "long." But we shall never call it long again when we have looked out into the immensities which lie on the other side the horizon of this little world. But that life the Infinite Himself calls "long." "Man goeth to his long home."

II. If that is home, then this is exile. We are not "expelled." Christ has secured us from that. But we are "banished." He deviseth means that His banished be not expelled. There is much, very much, to tell us we are not at "home" yet. The manners and the habits about us are all foreign. We are prisoners of hope, but we are prisoners; and by many things which we all feel, we know that the term of our exile will be over the moment of our death.

III. If that is home, we are travellers here. And every day should be a step homeward. We must not pitch our tents as if they were houses, for they will soon be taken down. We must not stop by the way to pick many flowers, and we must not care for little discomforts and disagreeable things as we go, seeing that our halting-places are only inns.

IV. If that is home, this is school. Hence the discipline. Life is all training. We have much to unlearn and much to learn, many habits to lose and many habits to form, before the minority of our existence here shall have fitted us for the maturity of our glorified manhood.

J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 189.

Reference: xii. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 326.

Chap. xii., ver. 6.—"Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken."

WHAT, we ask, is that view of man's present condition implied in the language which speaks of death and decay as a loosening of the silver cord and a breaking of the golden bowl?

I. It has been made an argument against the book of Ecclesiastes being the genuine writing of Solomon that it speaks so unmistakably of the immortality of the soul and of a judgment to come. It is asserted that these great doctrines were not revealed until after the age of Solomon. Now it must be freely confessed that it was in the later times of Jewish history, just as the temporal prosperity of Abraham's race was decaying, that the spiritual rewards of the righteous in another state were made to stand out more plainly to view. Nevertheless all along there had been an undertone running through God's revelation in which they who had ears to hear might catch the promise of a life beyond, although to grosser hearts it was doubtless a thing unknown. And if there had been these notes of immortality floating all down the rougher strain of human being, in an especial degree had they been gathered together by David and concentrated in bolder music. Such are those well-known words in Ps. xvi., "My flesh shall rest in hope, for Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption," etc. These are the songs of faith which Solomon in boyhood had learnt from his own father's lips. His extraordinary intellect would enable him, too, to appreciate, perhaps as none who went before had done, the whole strain of whispered truth as to man's immortal destiny. But the witness of Solomon ends not here. Whilst recognising fully the doctrine of the soul's exemption from death, he seems to have penetrated to the further truth that by the very nature of man our moral probation must be limited to this life. "Or ever the silver cord be loosed." Solomon regards man as essentially compounded of body and spirit. Loose the silver cord, and the creature "man" is no longer. Suppose the disembodied soul to be subjected to a probation after death, it would not be the probation of the same creature as before, but the trial of another and different creature. You cannot separate in temptation or in worship between the body and the soul. Sever the two, and you may have a trial, but it will not be the trial of a "man."

II. "Or ever the golden bowl be broken." The idea involved by the golden bowl is that of a costly vessel which receives and

retains. The idea is that of the receptiveness of man. Before this mysterious being, so richly endowed with all these capacities of living for God, of holding communion with Him, of turning from wickedness unto Him, is shattered, remember, O man, thy Creator. How knowest thou that when the golden vessel is once broken, when thy present mixed nature is shivered, and the fragments of thy flesh are scattered to the four winds, and thy spirit sent abroad into the darkness—how knowest thou of what sensations thou shalt be capable, of what impressions susceptible? Now thou art a golden bowl receptive of God; let Him come into thee and be thy God.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 155.

Chap. xii., ver. 7.—"The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

I. NOTHING is more difficult than to realise that every man has a distinct soul, that every one of all the millions who live or have lived is as whole and independent a being in himself as if there were no one else in the whole world but he. We class men in masses, as we might connect the stones of a building. Survey some populous town; crowds are pouring through the streets; every part of it is full of life. Hence we gain a general idea of splendour, magnificence, opulence, and energy. But what is the truth? Why, that every being in that great concourse is his own centre, and all things about him are but shades, but a "vain shadow," in which he walketh and disquieteth himself in vain. He has his own hopes and fears, desires, judgments, and aim; he is everything to himself, and no one else is really anything. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface.

II. All those millions upon millions of human beings who ever trod the earth and saw the sun successively are at this very moment in existence all together. If we have once seen any child of Adam, we have seen an immortal soul. It has not passed away as a breeze or sunshine, but it lives; it lives at this moment in one of those many places, whether of bliss or misery, in which all souls are reserved unto the end.

III. Every one of all the souls which have ever been on earth is in one of two spiritual states, so distinct from one another that the one is the subject of God's favour and the other under His wrath, the one on the way to eternal happiness, the other

to eternal misery. This is true of the dead, and it is true of the living also. Endeavour then to realise that you have souls, and pray God to enable you to do so. Endeavour to disengage your thoughts and opinions from the things that are seen; look at things as God looks at them, and judge of them as He judges. There will be no need of shutting your eyes to this world when this world has vanished from you, and you have nothing before you but the throne of God and the slow but continual movements about it in preparation of the judgment. In that interval, when you are in that vast receptacle of disembodied souls, what will be your thoughts about the world which you have left? How poor will then seem to you its highest aims, how faint its keenest pleasures, compared with the eternal aims, the infinite pleasures, of which you will at length feel your souls to be capable.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 80.

I. THESE words teach that the spirit of man is from God. The body was of His will; the life was of Himself, life of life. All things that were were of God; man only in his living spirit was from God.

II. What follows from this sonship to the Almighty? What does it mean as to man's true being? (1) That God's great gift to man is reason in its highest power of exercise; that is to say, the capacity of comprehending truth. (2) This spiritualised reason is gathered up by the girdle of individuality into the union of each separate soul in which it is impersonated. And thus again is it in God's image.

III. The words of the text speak of no absorption, of no ceasing to be. They say nothing of the separate consciousness being swallowed up into universal being, as the raindrop is swallowed up in the ocean depths. No, the girdle of individuality is the likeness of God's eternity; the unity of the soul is the transcript of His own everlasting unity.

S. WILBERFORCE, *The Pulpit*, No. 2172.

REFERENCES: xii. 7.—C. J. Vaughan, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 165. xii. 8.—H. V. Macdona, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 418.

Chap. xii., vers. 8-14.

I. KOHELETH has achieved the quest. He has solved the problem and given us his solution of it. He is about to repeat that solution. To give emphasis and force to the repetition, that he may carry his readers more fully with him, he dwells on his

claims to their respect, their confidence, their affection. He is all that they most admire; he has the very authority to which they most willingly defer. It is not out of any personal conceit, therefore, nor any pride of learning, that he recites his titles of honour. He is simply gathering force from the willing respect and deference of his readers in order that he may plant his final conclusion more strongly and more deeply in their hearts.

II. And what is the conclusion which he is at such pains to enforce? "The conclusion of the whole matter is this, that God taketh cognisance of all things. Fear God, therefore, and keep His commandments, for thus it behoveth all men to do." That this conclusion is simply a repetition, in part expanded and in part condensed, of that with which the Preacher closes the previous section, is sufficiently obvious. (1) *There* he incites men to a life of virtue by two leading motives: first, by the fact of the present constant judgment of God; and secondly, by the prospect of a future, a more searching and decisive, judgment. *Here* he appeals to precisely the same motives, though now, instead of implying the present judgment of God under the injunction "Remember thy Creator," he broadly affirms that God "taketh cognisance of all things," and instead of simply reminding the young that God will bring the ways of their heart into judgment, he defines that future judgment at once more largely and more exactly as "appointed for every secret thing' and extending to every deed, whether these be good or bad. (2) In speaking of the forms which a virtuous life should assume, he is very curt and brief. All he has to say on that point now is, "Fear God and keep His commandments." He can now say to his soul,

> "What hast thou to do with sorrow
> Or the injuries of to-morrow?"

for he has discovered that no morrow can any more injure him, that no sorrow can rob him of his chief good. All that he has to do is to fear God and keep His commandments, leaving the issues of his labour in the wise, gentle hands which bend all things to a final goal of good.

S. Cox, *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 264.

REFERENCES: xii. 8-14.—T. C. Finlayson, *A Practical Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 267. xii. 9, 10.—R. Buchanan, *Ecclesiastes: its Meaning and Lessons*, p. 422. xii. 9-14.—J. H. Cooke, *The Preacher's Pilgrimage*, p. 129. xii. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 221.

Chap. xii., ver. 13.—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

In its happy influence religion, or a filial compliance with the will of God, includes "the whole duty of man." It is self-contained felicity.

I. A new heart itself is happiness. When gifts are so good as the Gospel and its promises, so good as our kindred and friends, so good as the flowers of the field and the breath of new summer, it only needs an honest heart which takes them as they come, and which tastes unaltered the goodness of God that is in them. This is what the worldling wants; this new heart is what the God and Father of our Lord Jesus offers to you, to me.

II. The very faculty of joy is the gift of the Holy Ghost. He heals the canker of the churl, and sweetens the bitterness of the misanthrope; and by imparting the faculty of joy He has often exalted life into a jubilee and made a humble dwelling ring with hallelujahs.

III. A devout disposition is happiness. It is happiness whether outward things go well or ill.

IV. A benevolent disposition is happiness. Benevolence is God's life in the soul, diffusing in kind emotions, and good offices, and friendly intercessions; but, unlike other expenditures, the more it is diffused the more that life increases of which it is the sign: and to abound in love one towards another is to abound in hope towards God.

J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 242.

References: xii. 13.—Parker, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 10; G. Salmon, *Sermons in Trinity College, Dublin*, p. 148; J. Thain Davidson, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 275; J. M. Buckley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 75.

Chap. xii., vers. 13, 14.

I. Among the causes of a sceptical spirit I may assign the first place to that natural reaction against authority which results when the understanding is first emancipated from the control that restrained its free exercise during the years of earlier youth. Authority is the guide of childhood. There is in the child no prejudice, no reluctance to be taught. He is quite content to take his opinions upon trust. But the time arrives when reasoning at second hand no longer suffices us. As we acquire the power of thinking for ourselves we become also desirous to do so. And it seldom happens but that in the process we begin

to doubt of what we had hitherto regarded as indisputable truths. The development of our physical powers brings with it exactly the same kind of temptations as the evolution of our intellectual faculties. The time comes when the child feels his powers expand, and when the spirit of self-reliance which the consciousness of strength and vigour inspires would make those checks and restraints to be impatiently borne which were submitted to without reluctance before.

II. Scepticism possesses an attraction, especially for the minds of the young, from an idea that it indicates strength of mind. They feel that to be superior to vulgar prejudices is something to be proud of, and they fancy that they exhibit the greater power of mind the more they can overturn of what has been established before. I believe there is no greater mistake than this. Faith is the chief power which can effect anything great in this world. When it rises to enthusiasm, it has wrought wonders and revolutionised human affairs; but even in its ordinary sober form—strong conviction and consequent readiness to act on that conviction—it is that which gives a man power to do anything great himself and to influence others. Scepticism is the absence of this power. It may be a thing deserving sympathy, or tenderness, or pity; but it certainly is not a thing to be proud of.

G. SALMON, *Sermons Preached in Trinity College, Dublin*, p. 130.

REFERENCE: xii. 13, 14.—H. Wace, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 106.

Chap. xii., ver. 14.—"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

I. THESE words show, not only that each of us will be judged, but that each of us will be judged for each action of his life; not for his general character whether (taken altogether) he was on the whole a worldly or a pious man, or the like, but for every single act, good or bad, of which his entire life was made up. Each separate thing done, thought, or said, will be brought up again in due order—exactly as it was done, thought, or said—weighed, sifted, and judged; for "God," says the text, "shall bring *every* work into judgment."

II. We look inwards, and our very hearts die within us. We see dark blots over all the past; we think of those secrets of our souls which we ourselves shrink from recalling. And all of these are to be laid bare before God! How shall we prepare

ourselves for this judgment? There is but one answer to this question. There is One and One only to whom we can flee for help or succour, but He is all-sufficient. He is near at hand to hear our cry and help us; to renew, change and convert us; to help our infirmities; and He looks with loving and compassionating eyes on all our poor endeavours, on our struggles, our repentances, and our prayers; and as yet He pleads for us.

F. E. PAGET, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i., p. 122.

REFERENCES: xii. 14.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 4; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 83. xii.—C. Bridges, *An Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 283.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

Chap. i., ver. 1.—"The song of songs, which is Solomon's."

I. THOUGH written very possibly by Solomon with reference to the daughter of Pharaoh, this Song seems evidently to have had a deep symbolical meaning from the very beginning. All things in Scripture are for Christ's sake from the beginning of the world. The forms which, floating by, cast their shadows on the elder world were shades of that greater Figure which was to absorb the attention of mankind and of the Church for ever and ever. Such is the power which underlies the Song of Solomon. The Church has ever in her days of earnestness and special devotion used the Song of Solomon. It has been the thermometer of her condition; when and where her energy and love were strong, then and there the Song of songs became the mode and form of her expression.

II. The Song of Solomon is peculiarly suited to form a manual of devotion for those who, as penitents or saints, are seeking after Jesus. (1) Its images are the images natural to the earnest-minded. (2) Its expressions of penitence, humility, and self-condemnation make it beautifully fitted to the life of those who "mourn after a godly sort," and to become a manual of expression for the returning sinner. (3) The yearnings of love are among the most striking parts of the Song. The language is that of the deepest affection; and no expressions seem so natural a channel through which the stream of love may flow as those we find here. (4) The Song is typical of the acts of our Lord's life. His passion and resurrection are unmistakably shadowed forth in it; so much so, that the natural illustration of the Song would be the scenes of the Gospel.

E. MONRO, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 355

REFERENCES: i. 2.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 92. *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 8; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 5. i. 3.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 235; A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 317.

Chap. i., ver. 4.—"Draw me, we will run after thee."

THIS passage is most appropriate in the mouth of the Church, considered as of Gentile origin, eager to be drawn after Christ; afraid of contempt from the people of Jerusalem, as being of another race, and anxiously inquiring of the Bridegroom where He keepeth His flock—ignorant, up to that moment, of God's manner of dealing with His chosen.

I. The text brings us across the great mystery of God's predestination. The cry of man to God is, "Draw me, and I will follow Thee." In the New Testament we have our blessed Lord declaring, "No man cometh unto Me, except the Father draw him." In some sense or other, predestination is the eternal truth of God. Wherever predestination is spoken of, it is a predestination which concerns, not our final salvation or condemnation, but simply our call to the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Thousands of years ago it was predestined that we should be blessed with the knowledge of Christ, but it was not predestined whether we should be saved thereby. What the Bible teaches is, that God has predestined some to a knowledge of the truth of Christ, and shut it up from others; not that He has predestined some to heaven and some to hell.

II. Consider these words as the utterance of the bride after her union with Christ. (1) The entire life of man is a period during which there is perpetually being exerted upon the soul a gentle violence, alluring, tempting it to follow the footsteps of Christ. The details of our existence are so planned as to lead us unto heaven. If we would surrender ourselves into God's hands unreservedly, He would bring us safe to the eternal city. (2) The text implies that the course of the servant of God is one of constant progress and active advance. Christ is ever, as it were, moving onward; He leads us from one height of moral excellence to another.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i., p. 178.

I. THE spiritual life has three states through which all who attain to the love of Christ seem to pass; and these states are so marked that we may take them one by one. (1) I suppose that most can remember a time when we were drawn so strongly to the world that the drawing of Christ's love and spirit was overbalanced by a more powerful attraction. Sin is sweet, and it draws steadily and smoothly, as the shoal water of a whirlpool, with an imperceptible and resistless attraction. One sin will overbear the meek and gentle drawing of Christ.

It is not only the greater sin, or the worship of the world, which holds us back against the drawing of Christ, but the soft, pure happiness of home, the easy round of kindly offices, the calm and blameless toil of a literary life, the gentler and more peaceful influences of earthly cheerfulness;—all these, too, with the lights and shades, the anxieties and joys, which fall across an even path, steal away the heart, and wind all its affections about a thousand moorings. (2) Let us take the next state. It may be that by sorrow or chastisement, or by some other of His manifold strokes of love, it has pleased God to break or to relax these bonds, and to dispel the vain show in which they walked. The world draws them less, and the presence of Christ attracts them more. Such persons are in a balanced state, between two attractions, of which, if the one be weaker, it is the nearer and the more sensibly perceived. This condition is at times dreary and overcast, and cannot last long. It must incline one way or the other. (3) And this leads on into the third and last state, in which the balance is so turned against this world, that it can allure no longer; and the hope of God and His kingdom attracts alone. In some special way God is often pleased to break the bonds of this world, and to draw His servants once for all under the abiding attractions of the world to come. Perhaps nothing does this so surely as a realisation of death.

II. Let us suppose that God has, in love, broken your bonds asunder and drawn you unto Himself. How will you answer to this mercy? (1) It would be the plain will of God that you should strive with all your soul and strength to follow whither He is drawing you: that is, to prepare yourselves to dwell with Him for ever. (2) Give your whole heart and strength to perpetuate and perfect what you have learned to the very end of life. H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 388.

THERE is one point on the very face of the text which it is important to notice. We may come to God collectively, but we are drawn to God each one individually. Draw *me: we* will run after Thee. Notice how this effectual drawing will begin to show itself in those who have been, indeed, the subjects of it.

I. Obedience to an impulse of God will be instant. A "drawing" never takes effect to-morrow. Real religion is always in the present tense. It is Abraham's "Here am I!" It is Isaiah's "Send me!" It is Christ's "Lo, I come!"

II. A person who is under the drawing of God will be sure to begin to make conscience of little things. Things which were to him as nothing he will consider all-important, because they give him the opportunity of pleasing or displeasing God.

III. Another step—a very early step in the road—is a desire for the salvation of somebody else. Be very suspicious about your religion if you are not anxious about anybody's soul.

IV. The man who is really drawn so loves the drawing that he always wants to be drawn more and more. He finds that it is so pleasant. He is always trying to get nearer. Therefore he is a man of much prayer—because he is nearer at such times. He wants oneness, closeness, and identity with Christ.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 8th series, p. 141.

REFERENCES: i. 4.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 220; *Ibid., Evening by Evening*, pp. 1, 23; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 196; J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 34; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 19.

Chap i., vers. 4-6.—"Draw me, we will run after Thee: the King hath brought me into His chambers," etc.

I. NOTE (1) what it is that the Church desires from Christ—what every pious soul must desire who would make prayer to Christ at all. "Draw me," allure me, bring my soul under the power of a love-captivity. (2) "And we will run after Thee." This seems to denote the alacrity with which, after experimental acquaintance with Christ and the power of His grace, we shall persevere in our Christian course. This speed comes of Christ's drawing, and, as it is in material bodies, the velocity increases as we get nearer to the centre of the attracting influence. (3) Remark next the grounds on which the Church presumes to hope for these glorious manifestations of Christ's love to her. A large suit should be endorsed by a strong plea, nor could we walk so boldly unless there had been first the extending towards us of the golden sceptre. "The King hath brought me into His chambers;" He hath recognised the rightfulness of my espousals; He hath initiated for me this covenant relation of protection and peace and mercy, and therefore by Him, by the King Himself, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

II. "I am black, but comely." The words may be taken in reference to the triumphs and sorrows of earth. (1) The first reason assigned for the Church's uncomely visage, for some of her dark spots and blemishes, is persecution. "The sun hath

looked upon me." (2) Opposition, disagreement, strifes, and feuds, among her own children. (3) The winter of her own religious spirit, the fear of loss to her personal spiritual devotion on account of over-zeal to discharge faithfully a public trust. "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3512.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"I am black, but comely."

THE whole volume of spiritual truth lies rolled up in these few words. You might expand them into both the Testaments. Penitence and faith—all the heart knows of itself and all it knows of Jesus—nature and grace—condemnation and peace. God's great method with man in His everlasting covenant—it is all here, "Black, but comely." The contrast matches with the experience of every child of God; the contradiction lies in the double being of a renewed man; the solution of the paradox is the gospel of Christ.

I. What is "blackness?" Properly, it is no colour at all. It is that which reflects no tint of all the sun's prismatic rays. It is not one of the hues of the rainbow. It is the absence of colour. It is a simple negative. Remember, this is blackness,—a negative life. The absence of love and energy, and work for Christ is the great crime in God's calendar Nothing more was wanted to place those who were on the left hand on the day of judgment. You are black, because heaven does not reflect itself in you. It is your colourless life.

II. How can the black be comely? There must be something introduced from without. There must be a new nature. David expressed it all in those few words, "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered." It is the covering which is the comeliness. Jesus lived to make a man's righteousness which He could give to a man When a man puts it on, it not only hides all that is underneath it, but it decks that man in more than celestial loveliness. He wears a robe, which is woven of all the tissues of the holiness of Jesus—dipped in the dies of heaven—sparkling in all its splendours. This is the wedding garment which gives to our dull souls their festive sweetness.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 45.

Chap. i., vers. 5, 15 and Chap. v., ver. 16.—"I am black." "Behold, thou art fair." "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

I. LOOK first at the saint's "I am." It is a sad one. "I am

black—black as the tents of Kedar." Every saint is conscious of innumerable sins, blemishes, and imperfections. The more spiritually-minded the Christian is, the more conscious is he of his blackness; and the nearer a man lives to God, the more intense is his abhorrence of himself.

II. Listen next to Christ's response: "Behold, thou art fair, My love; behold, thou art fair." This is not the language of exaggeration. Although the Lord loves His Church intensely He does not love it unreasonably; His love does not blind His eyes to His people's defects. And yet He says, "Behold, thou art fair." Though He sees faults and failings *in me*, He does not see *me in* my faults and failings, but views me as I am in Himself. When He looks upon us, He sees His own loveliness, and His own righteousness, and so He may well say, "Thou art fair."

III. Lastly, you have the Church's "He is." "Yea, he is altogether lovely." That Christ is altogether lovely is the united testimony of all saints in every age. In Him all the colours of beauty combine—all the harmonies that can be conceived blend in one ravishing strain. There is no one drawback in Him. He is lovely to my mind's judgment; lovely to my heart's affection; lovely to my will's surrender; lovely in my memory's treasure-house. He is all beauty, and beauty all round, and the Church gives this as her united testimony concerning Him.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1090.

REFERENCE: i. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 30.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

I. WHAT is this complaint? "Mine own vineyard have I not kept." The spiritual nature of a godly man is here supposed to be likened to a vineyard. (1) It is a soil in which things are planted and sown. (2). It is a sphere affording full scope for exertion, vigilance and zeal. (3) Judicious labour secures profit and reward. (4) Neglect makes evil fertile and brings miserable barrenness of good.

II. Look at the cause and the occasion of the evil complained of. (1) The cause of self-neglect is not in the vineyard-keeping for others; it must be in the character of the individual concerned. We are all of us apt to charge our faults and failings upon God's providence, or upon God's arrangements. The

cause may be: (*a*) False views of a state of salvation, and of our personal obligations; (*b*) Excess of zeal for the welfare of others; (*c*) False amiability and accessibility to others; (*d*) A strong taste for the excitement of caring for others, and the vanity which prefers the position of keeper of the vineyard to the quiet condition of attending to one's own vineyard. (2) The occasion—"They made me." A great deal of religious and benevolent work is done evidently as unto man, and not as unto God. We neglect our own vineyards because others call us away, and we obey. We become engrossed. We become too ardent. We are keeping the vineyards of others, just, perhaps, that it may be said that we are keeping their vineyards, and that we may have the praise of the fruit of the vineyard, or that we may please those who are connected with the vineyard. The occasion of self-neglect is suggested in these words:—"They made me keeper of the vineyards."

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 14.

NOT merely made keeper; you may be put into an office, yet fail to do its duties faithfully and well. But the suggestion here plainly is, that the vineyards of others were diligently kept, while by a fatality which might be thought unparalleled, if it were not one of the commonest of things, the vineyard at home was neglected.

I. Probably there are few who have reached middle age, and have incurred the responsibilities of domestic life, who can think of the text without some inward self-reproach. The matter is one of wide concern when we remember that every Sunday-school teacher, every visitor of the sick or the poor, every human being who is called to say a word of warning to an erring creature, or a word of encouragement to a weary one; every father and mother whose example and conversation and entire life, to its least detail, may affect the impressionable nature of their child; is called to keep the vineyard at home, if they would not have it scatter the slight seeds of mighty evil wide and far. We are all of us watched by far more eyes than we think of; and spiritual characteristics in us may re-appear in those who have no intention of imitating us, but who insensibly fall into ways which they continually see.

II. The great lesson of the text is, care for your own soul; care for the souls of your children; care for the souls of your friends; care for the souls of all you know and do not know. Every vineyard under the wide skies, where you can pull up

a weed or cast one good seed, the smallest—of that vineyard God has made you keeper.

So much the more diligently see that you keep your own; so much the more earnestly, as you would successfully mind the things of others, look to yourself. If we would do anything in this world, we with our little strength, we must begin with what lies to our hand; we must begin with the nearest. When things are right at home, we shall be abler to meddle with good result in things far away.

A. K. H. B., *Towards the Sunset*, p. 25.

REFERENCES: i. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 990; A. K. H. B., *Sunday Magazine*, 1881, p. 28; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 111. i. 7.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 40; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 338, and vol. xi., No. 636; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 34. i. 7, 8.—*Ibid.*, vol. xix., No. 1115; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 247; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 324.

Chap. i., ver. 8.—"Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."

I. KEEP on familiar ground; do not stray away from the line of footsteps; be near where you can hear the pipe, or the flute, or the trumpet of the camp. Do not detach yourselves from the great company of the church, but wherever you are see that your method of communication is in good working order. This is not the exhortation of fear, it is the precept of sense, it is the dictate of reason, it is the calm, strong, solemn view of history and experience.

II. Loneliness has its perils in the religious life. When the devil gets a man absolutely alone, who will win? Not the man—in the vast proportion of cases. There was only one man that won in single fight, and that man was the Lord from heaven. The poor woman in the song had lost her loved one, and she was told that if she wanted to find him she would find him on accustomed beats and familiar paths. God leaves His footprints on the earth, and if we follow His footprints we shall find Himself.

III. Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. Then you will have communion. Christianity institutes a fellowship, a community of interest and spirit and purpose. We are the complement of one another. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together; beware of the independence which is isolation; seek for communion, for music, for protection, for security, for all that comes of organised life, household delight, and trust; thus the enemy will never find you alone and at a

disadvantage, but always surrounded by those who can recall the sweetest memories to your recollection, and enrich your hearts by reminders of the infinite promises of God, and thus a commonwealth shall be the basis of victory.

IV. Let us see that our footprints are all shaping towards home, that the foot is always set in the direction of home. Do not let us deceive and mislead anybody who may put their feet into our footprints under the impression that they are going home, when they are really going to their ruin.

PARKER, *Fountain*, June 19th, 1879.

Chap. i., ver. 9.—"I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots."

IT is thus that love multiplies itself by many images. Love sees the image of its dearest one everywhere, and claims it as its own. Look at the power of fancy, this creative and symbolising power, this power of reading the inner mysticism and ideality of things (1) as a joy, (2) as a danger, (3) as a responsibility.

I. A joy. In finding new symbols we find new pleasures, and in the inspiration of our love we turn all things visible to new and sacred uses. This is the joy of Christ Himself in the 13th chapter of the Gospel by Matthew. The object of His love was the kingdom of heaven, and day by day He compared it with new comparisons, and so gave His Church the treasure of His parables.

II. Not only is this power of fancy a keen and thrilling joy, but it is a positive and an immediate danger. The danger arises from the fact that we may consider our duty done when we have instituted a beautiful comparison. Our religion may perish in sentimental expressions; you may die in words. The danger is, that if we live the parabolical life we may never advance to Gethsemane and Golgotha. We may create a kind of artificial life, and thus miss the great utilities of our being. Not the heart that is swiftest and surest in the creation of symbols is always to be trusted in the hour of pain and distress.

III. A responsibility. We are to be transformed by the beauty that we admire. In comparing Christ with things beautiful, noble, grand, we are writing a heavy indictment against ourselves if we profess to be His followers, and do not rise to the grandeur of the occasion. As he who passes through a garden of roses brings with him part of the fragrance breathed from the beauteous flowers, so we who come forth from the

fellowship of Christ are to show somewhat of the radiance of His countenance, and to speak somewhat with the eloquence of His accent. PARKER, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 289.

REFERENCES: i. 9.—Parker, *Fountain*, March 31st, 1881. i. 9-14.—D. Mocre, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3520. i. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 49. i. 13.—*Ibid.*, p. 58; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 558. i. 16.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 143. i. 18.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 104. ii. 1.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 784; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 122; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 204. ii. 2.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1525. ii. 3.—*Ibid.*, vol. xix., No. 1120; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 238; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 76. ii. 3, 4.—F. Perry, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 388. ii. 3, 5.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 160.

Chap. ii., ver. 4.—"He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love."

IN estimating the blessedness of any creature, you must never forget that there is a certain faculty of enjoyment which is itself the gift of God. And have we not here at once the real secret of the certainty of the superior delights of the people of God—in that to them alone, or at least to them in a far higher degree than to other men, is given that capacity of enjoyment, that appreciation of the sweet and beautiful and holy, which is radiant in everything.

I. Among the choice things of the prepared banquet, the chief is rest. It is only the Gospel of Jesus Christ which has the exclusive prerogative to give a man rest. And every one who goes into that sanctuary of the soul's rest, is a man who, just before, has been fighting his way to it through tremendous toils and conquests.

II. If there can be anything on this side of heaven worthy to be mentioned with that rest—the feeling of a forgiven soul—it is intimacy with God Himself; the nearness, and consequently the acquaintance with God's mind, into which the Christian is at once, though it be progressive, yet at once admitted; as soon as he obeys the drawings of the spirit, and comes near to God.

III. It is the actual presence of Christ which becomes dear to an advancing Christian. He has had His grace, but He wants Him. Therefore, more and more as a believer lives, you will find him meditating on the Person and the Being of Christ.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 101.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—J. J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3218; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 85.

Chap. ii., ver. 5.—"Comfort me with apples."

I. Looking at an apple from a morphological point of view, we find that it is an arrested branch. Instead of going on to develop more wood and foliage, a branch terminates in an apple; and in this apple the sap and substance that would have prolonged the branch are concentrated, and hence its enlarged size and capability of expansion. We behold in it, as in a glass, a very striking natural example of the law of self-sacrifice; that law which pervades all nature, and upon which the welfare and stability of nature depend. It is in this self-sacrifice of the plant that all its beauty comes out and culminates.

II. The little globe of the apple is a microcosm, representing within its miniature sphere the changes and processes which go on in the great world. Life and death, growth and decay, fight their battle on its humble stage. While it hangs upon its stem, it is in some kind of magnetic correspondence with all the powers of nature; it shares the life of the earth and the sky. It is an embodiment of the air and the sunshine, and the dew. But its special charm consists not in its scientific teaching or in its material utilities. Who would care to study an apple or any other natural object, were it not for its religious side? Nothing can be simpler and lowlier than such an object lesson. It is nigh unto us, in our very mouths, familiar to every child, but its simplicity is the mystery of the unsearchable God, the depth of the clear but unfathomable heaven. Autumn is the season of revealing; and the fruit is ripened when the foliage that hid the orchard is stripped off, and all its secrets are opened to the glances of the sun. But no autumn of revelation comes to this tree of knowledge, and we pluck its fruit from the bough in the midst of mysteries that conceal even while they reveal it—that baffle even while they instruct us. But these mysteries are favourable to faith and to a simple, childlike trust, leaving what it cannot understand, with a wise contentment, in the infinity of God.

H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 213.

References: ii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1463. ii. 8.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 80. ii. 8-17.—R. M. McCheyne, *Memoir and Remains*, p. 437. ii. 9.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 168. ii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 116. ii. 10-12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermon on the Song of Songs*, p. 92; J. H. Newman, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 190. ii. 10-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 436.

Chap. ii., vers. 11, 12.—"For, lo, the winter is past,—the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

THERE are two characteristics of spring that strike us, I do not say as wrong, but as more belonging to human than Divine character. The first of these is its changeableness, the second its extravagance.

I. Even in climates better than our own we know the changeableness of spring, but in our spring scarcely a single day is true to its beginning. But when we look closer, such change belongs naturally to the first rush of life, not only in spring but in all things. (1) It paints our own youth only too faithfully. Our outer life flits from interest to interest, from friend to friend, from love to love, as the winds of purpose, interest, and impulse blow. As to our inner life of feeling and thought, it is never at rest for a single moment. To cherish this changeableness is wrong. But as long as it belongs to youth we have no right to be too hard on it. Our business is to accept what is natural in it, and to guide its eager life into noble ways. (2) We may learn another bit of wisdom from the changeableness of spring. It is caused by the last struggle of winter against the warm gusts of life. It images the struggle in a heart which has come out of the far country of sin, near to God its Father. The life of God and the glowing of His love have begun to move within, to clothe the barren soil with the flowers and the blossoms that promise fruit. But the old deathfulness still lingers; habits of evil, not yet overcome of good, raise themselves again, and conquer for a time; the storms of trial that resistance to sin causes are so violent as to exhaust for a season all spiritual strength, and we seem to die. Take comfort from the spring. Life is stronger than death, goodness than sin, noble joy than base sorrow. Day by day the attacks of evil will lessen, day by day they will be easier overcome, and a summer of righteousness will be yours at last.

II. The extravagance of the spring. Much more than is apparently needful is produced. There is the greatest prodigality, even waste; of a hundred flower-shoots not half come to perfection; of a cloud of blossoms many altogether fail. The analogy to this in our youth is in itself sad enough. But when we ask ourselves in what the changeableness and prodigality of spring ends, the analogy ceases to be true, and the rebuke and warning of nature is given to our youth. God's end for spring

is the fulness of summer and the harvest of autumn. There is no other end also than that for youth; richness of nature in oneself and a plenteous harvest for the world.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 337.

I. LIFE, love, joy—what are these in their tale to the spirit, as spring sends them flowing into our hearts? They are a revelation of the Being of God. (1) Its first attribute is infinite life. In this world of decay and death, where sorrow and apathy and dulness play so large a part in us, it is unspeakable comfort to know that there is above us and in our God an eager, unwearied, universal life. (2) This life is love—love in God, the same as goodness. That there is such a thing as creation; that life and joy come out of death and pain; that the wonder of the spring is born out of the travail of the winter, is proof enough to those who feel how impossible creation is to evil, that it is goodness—goodness that streams forth as love; love that is life in all things, that is the spirit of the universe. (3) If life and love be one in the being of God, that being must also be joy—infinite, self-exultant, varying through every phase of quiet and of rapture. Words would fail to paint one moment of its triumphant fulness: joy is the glory of God.

II. We take the same thoughts, and bring them to touch on our own life. Spring is the image of our youth, and the lesson we should learn from it is, that our youth should be life and love and joy, and that these are its natural companions.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 324.

REFERENCES: ii. 11, 12.—W. P. Balfern, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 237. ii. 11-13.—W. Sanday, *Expositor*, vol. iii., p. 240; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 97. ii. 11-14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 205. ii. 12.—J. N. Norton, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 8; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, 2nd series, p. 230; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 115. ii. 14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 518.

Chap. ii., ver. 15.—"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

To despise little things is to show oneself utterly ignorant of the philosophy of life. The phrase "little sins," common though it be, is highly unscriptural, highly immoral. In the Bible you will frequently find such sins as lying, slander, and selfishness classed with sins like drunkenness, theft or murder. The former are represented as equally effective with the latter in excluding from the kingdom of God.

I. It is curious to notice that the very characteristics which commonly earn for a sin the name of little, are often just the characteristics which in reality enhance its sinfulness, and render it pre-eminently worthy of being called great. For example, an ingenious prevarication would be usually considered far less sinful than a downright awkward falsehood. But the kernel of truth which it contains makes it *more* sinful, not less. It shows its perpetrator to be a cultivated liar. Judged, too, by its effects, it may often be discovered to be a lie of surpassing magnitude.

II. The sins of which we are speaking not only cause a vast amount of suffering, but they have the most fatal effect upon character. A great sin, severely punished and bitterly repented of, is not all likely to be repeated. The sins which seem to be little, just for that very reason, and also because they are generally unpunished, are likely to be first of all ignored by a man, and then repeated, till at last their total effect may be to render his character hopelessly and irretrievably bad. A number of very little sins will make a very great sinner.

III. Our so-called little sins have the most fatal moral effect upon the characters of others. They are just the sins which others will be likely to imitate. The average man is more likely to be infected by such a sin as scandal than he is to be infected by such a sin as theft. Therefore these little sins do the most widespread moral mischief in society.

IV. If we desire to form for ourselves a perfect character, a studied avoidance of little sins is of the first importance. Our habits depend upon the way in which we comport ourselves; not in great and startling emergencies, but rather under the simple, common circumstances of our common daily life. Everything we do or say leaves us somewhat different from our former selves, and is productive of good or evil to numbers of our fellow-men. Every action we perform, every word we utter, every thought we think, has wide-spreading, far-reaching effects—effects that will eternally endure. Stand in awe and sin not.

A. W. Momerie, *The Origin of Evil, and Other Sermons*, p. 86.

I. Consider the text as addressed to the individual, (1) The evils, the capture of which is here urged, are such as the following:—Ostentation, concealment, the easily offended and unforgiving spirit, fear of man and men-pleasing, anxiety, and all such plausible errors in doctrine and specious deviations from

truth as affect principle and conduct. (2) The good which may be marred is of this kind:—The subjects of Christ's kingdom are born from above; we may expect in them heavenly-mindedness. They are born of God, and we may look to them for godliness. The fruit, in this case, is the fruit of righteousness, sown in place of them that make peace. (3) This good may thus be marred:—The pursuit of religious information may be checked. The judgment may be perverted or corrupted. The conscience may be blunted or defiled. The energy of holy principle may be impaired. The lustre of reputation may be dimmed. (4) Such mischief ought to be prevented or cured. Take the foxes. Make impending evil captive, and, if possible, destroy it.

II. Contemplate the text as addressed to the churches of Christ. Take the foxes: govern the tongue, cleanse the hands, purify the heart. Have light in your countenance and salt in yourselves, that you may live together and act together with joy and with profit.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 43.

IT is only man's littleness which discovers no importance in trifles. Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle. The most deplorable failures in Christian consistency and uprightness may, generally, be traced back to a very small departure from duty. Little sins are as wrong as larger ones, and in the end come to the same thing. They are, in fact, the foxes that spoil the vines.

What are some of these little sins which mar our happiness or hinder our usefulness?

I. At the head of the list may be placed a sour and crabbed temper.

II. Another little sin to be watched against, is the giving way to ease and self-indulgence.

III. Dishonesty in our ordinary dealings may be named as another example of little sins.

IV. Another little sin is jealousy. It is a weakness which few would confess that they have yielded to, and yet multitudes are made miserable by its evil influence.

In religious character there is nothing unimportant, and the smallest inlets of sin should be carefully closed. Earnest prayer and dilligent effort should be employed, that the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts may be more thorough and pervading. J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 348.

REFERENCES: ii. 15.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 151; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 21; *Expositor*, 3rd series,

vol. iii., p. 63; T. T. Shore, *The Life of the World to come*, p. 215; T. Champness, *Little Foxes*, p. 7; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 106.

Chap. ii., ver. 16.—"My beloved is mine, and I am His."

THESE few deep words express the bond or hold of love between Christ and His Elect, whether they be saints or penitents, and they fasten it by a twofold strength. "My beloved is mine; and not this alone, but "I am His." They teach us: I. That He is ours in the very sense in which we speak of our father or our child, our life or our own soul. And how has He become ours? Not by deserving or earning, by finding or seeking; not by climbing up to Him, or taking Him for ours; but because He gave Himself to us. He gave Himself to us as the bridegroom gives Himself to the bride. In this mystery of love is summed up all that is inviolable, binding and eternal. He will never draw back from it, or release Himself, or annul His vows, or cast us away. The pledge of His love is everlasting, as His love itself.

II. And next: these words mean that, in giving Himself to be ours, He took us to be His own. It is a full contract, binding both, though made and accomplished by Himself alone. We are bought, purchased, redeemed; we are pledged, vowed, and betrothed; but, better than all these, He has made us to be His by the free, willing and glad consent of our own heart. This is why we may call Him "My Beloved."

III. These words are full of all manner of consolation. (1) They interpret to us the whole discipline of sorrow. It is most certain that, if it were not necessary for our very salvation, He would never send affliction. (2) In this we see further the true pledge of our perseverance unto the end. Our whole salvation is begun, continued, and ended in His love. He that kept us from perishing when we were willing to perish, will surely keep us from perishing now that we are trembling to be saved. (3) In this there is our true and only stay in death. If we were saints, if we loved Him with all our soul and with all our strength, the most blessed day in life would be the last. To go and be with Him whom our soul loveth; to be for ever with Him, gazing upon His face of love, ourselves sinless, and living by love alone —this is heaven.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 411.

I. THINK first of the person here designated "My Beloved." Christ is the object of the believer's love. He is altogether

lovely (1) when we consider His Person. We behold in Him all the beauty of the Godhead and of humanity. (2) When we consider His suitableness. He is suitable to us as the image of the invisible God. Man needs this: man was made thus. He was himself made in God's image, after His likeness—and he lost it; but now he has in Christ the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. He is suitable to our state as ignorant—being made of God unto us "wisdom;" as guilty—being made of God unto us "righteousness;" as polluted—being made of God unto us "sanctification;" and as altogether undone—being made of God unto us "redemption."

II. Now of this Beloved, the Church says and the believer says, "He is mine, and I am His." This is the language (1) of direct faith; (2) of adherence to Christ; (3) of strong affection.

III. There are times when this affection is brought into more lively exercise, and the soul says, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." (1) There is the time of conversion—of the first embracing of Christ. (2) There are times of special approach, of peculiar fellowship, when Christ draws near the soul, and the soul under His approach draws near. (3) There is the time of recovery out of backsliding, out of carelessness, out of forgetfulness of God. (4) There is the hour of death; (5) the hour of temptation, which is twofold—temptation of want, and temptation of fulness. (6) The time of sacramental communion when He who gave Himself for you gives Himself to you.

J. DUNCAN, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 159.

THE going-out of every man's mind is after property. The keenest man of business and the devoutest Christian share this principle alike; both desire property. There is no rest in anything till it is property. This universal desire is the return of the mind to the original design of its creation. Man was made to be a proprietor. Sin broke the title-deeds; all property rose in rebellion against its proprietor, and death cancelled every tenure. From that time, man has nothing to do with any creature, but as with a loan. The heart that holds, and the treasure that is holden, are only upon a lease. Woe to the man who calls anything his own. He will wake up to-morrow and find it gone. Christ is the property—the only property a man has, or ever can have, in any world. God never revokes that. And Christ carries with Him the universe, and carries with Him all that is of real value in this life. "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

I. The communication of Christ to the Church is always called a *gift.* "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is *given.*"

II. It is not only by a common deed of gift that Christ is made over to a believer, it has been made a matter of most solemn contract.

III. There is a property to which neither gift nor compact can reach. It is the property which a man holds in *himself.* Christ is actually in you,—the very being, and framework, and constitution in every believer. There is no unity in any part of a man in himself more real than that which Christ holds with every member of His Church.

IV. "I am His." Possession depends upon the possessor. What were the best property if the possessor cannot keep it? There are two ways in which possession may be obtained. By an act on the part of the possessor, and by an act on the part of the possessed. On the part of the possessor, by purchase and conquest, and on the part of the possessed by surrender. It is by these three processes, united, that any soul becomes Christ's property.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons,* 10th series, p. 215.

REFERENCES: ii. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons,* vol. vii., No. 374, and vol. xx., No. 1190; J. Duncan, *The Pulpit and Communion Table,* p. 172. ii. 16, 17.—*Ibid., Evening by Evening,* p. 171; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs,* p. 118.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

WHATEVER the first use and intent of this phrase, it describes a waiting and a joy to come; a waiting under darkness and shadow, and a joy to come with the light. And so the words answer well the purpose of suggesting the truth, that there are many things in life and destiny that are to be awaited.

I. We wait for rest. If the question were raised, Is man made for toil or for rest?— the answer would be a mixed and qualified one. He is appointed to toil, he is destined to rest; one is his condition, the other is his end. Unceasing toil is the largest feature of human life. As the sun journeys about the earth, it summons the greater part of those it shines on to hard and heavy toil, till its setting dismisses them to brief rest. And this rest is chiefly found in sleep, the nightly death to life, as though rest were no part of man's conscious life. We die, in a sense, to this daily life of toil, to get rest, and thus go off into a world of freedom that is revealed to us by fragments of chance-remembered dreams. Now, surely, it is an intimation that the other death ushers us into a world of absolute freedom

and repose; for freedom and repose are correlatives. Rest is something to be awaited in God's own time. To unduly seize it is ruin; it breaks the mould in which our life is cast. To patiently wait for it makes toil endurable, and assures us that our external lives are not a mockery of the hopes wrought into us. Some morning this shadow will flee away. In the Church of St. Nazaro in Florence is an epitaph upon the tomb of a soldier, as fit for the whole toiling race as for his own restless life, "Johannes Divultino, who never rested, rests—hush!" We say of our dead, "They rest from their labours."

II. We wait for the renewal of lost powers. St. Paul speaks of the redemption of the body as something that is waited for. He means no narrow doctrine of a physical resurrection, but a renewal of existence—a restoration of lost powers.

III. We wait for the full perfecting of character. We are keyed, not to attainment, but to the hope of it by struggle towards it. And it is the struggle, and not the attainment, that measures character and foreshadows destiny.

IV. We wait the renewal of sundered love. Love may suffer an eclipse, but it is not sent wailing into eternal shadows. It is as sure as God Himself that human love shall again claim its own.

V. We wait for the mystery to be taken off from life. Mystery may remain, but it will be harmonious mystery. The accusing doubt, the seeming contradiction, the painful uncertainty, will pass away, and we shall see "face to face," and know even as we have been known.

VI. We wait for full restoration to the presence of God.

T. T. MUNGER, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 379.

AT its longest, the night can only run its appointed hours. The aggregate of the trouble that is to be in this world was a pre-ordained, fixed quantity. The older we grow the easier it ought to be to say, "Till the day break."

I. There are four things which seem to me to make the night of this present state. (1) Indistinctness. We see a very little way, and what we do see is so imperfect, and we make such sad mistakes. (2) Oppressiveness. Who has not felt the weight of night? Have we not all had consciousness of power which we could not put forth—an awe, an enervating sense of the unknown, all about us? (3) Loneliness makes a great part of the feeling of night. (4) The want of God's felt presence. This world is simply what it is because Christ

has not His proper place in it. All things else, be they what they may, become dark in consequence of that one eclipse.

II. But there are signs, glowing signs, that the cheer of the morning is coming. Only two unfulfilled prophecies stand between us and the second Advent. (1) The evangelisation of the whole world; but already the Gospel is a witness to the whole world. (2) The restoration of the Jews; but it is just possible that that restoration may follow, not precede, His coming. But if not, their return might occupy such a small space of time, that literally a nation might be born in a day.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 258.

REFERENCES: ii. 17.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 53. iii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 19; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 127.

Chap. iii., ver. 2.—"I sought Him, but I found Him not."

PROPHETICALLY, the whole of these verses may be taken as delineating the sorrow of the first disciples at the departure of Christ from the earth. But the passage has its fulfilment again and again. The leading idea is that of a temporary estrangement, real or imaginary, between Christ and His people, during which they seek Him, but cannot find Him.

I. There would be nothing remarkable in the Redeemer denying the consolations of His presence to those who were careless about Him. The remarkable point suggested by the text is that there is such a thing as desiring God, and being disappointed. It would seem an ordinary feature in God's providence to withdraw occasionally from the saints, in order to increase that very craving after Him which He declines to gratify. He suspends His operations on their behalf until what we call the last moment. There is a failing to discover God for which He will not condemn us, a failing which comes not of us but of Him, in the plenitude, not of wrath, but of mercy. Only be sure that you really struggle to do what He enjoins. Only resolve whether He pour upon you the sunshine of His favour, or leave you wrapped in clouds to be found in the path of duty, and the temporary gloom shall ere long fade, and a fairer morning break.

II. From the foregoing considerations there flows a very solemn thought. The Redeemer must personally engage Himself about every soul. The spirit of each man and woman is a separate planet in the spiritual system, whose summer and

winter, whose storms and sunshine, are regulated by Deity alone. Hence the full meaning of that passage in which Christ Jesus is called the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. It intimates that the human soul is so fine and subtle a thing that none but He can supervise and tend it. His withdrawing Himself is a proof of His individual care.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 105.

REFERENCES: iii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 275; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 207; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 458; R. M. McCheyne, *Memoirs and Remains*, p. 412. iii. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1035. iii. 5-8.—C. A. Fowler, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 119. iii. 6-11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 482. iii. 7-8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 137. iii. 9, 10.—*Ibid.*, pp. 151, 360. iii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1134. iii. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 311. iv. 6.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, pp. 159, 172. iv. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, pp. 337, 338. iv. 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 282. iv. 12.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 323; R. M. McCheyne, *Memoirs and Remains*, p. 337. iv. 12-15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 431; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 184.

Chap. iv., ver. 16.—"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

THE offices of the Holy Spirit are manifold.

I. It is He who must convince us of sin (John xvi. 8).

II. Conversion, in its true and scriptural sense, a turning from wrong to right, is another part of the Holy Spirit's work.

III. Another reason why we should devoutly beseech the Holy Spirit to blow upon the Lord's garden, in which we have been planted, is that He may purify us by His grace.

IV. A fourth reason is that we may evermore rejoice in His holy comfort. Without the Holy Ghost, the garden of the Lord would be the most barren desert. He is our companion, teacher, advocate, friend, comforter.

V. We cannot dispense with the influences of the Spirit, because it is only when these are felt, that the spices in the Lord's garden shed forth their abundant sweetness.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 285.

REFERENCES: iv. 16.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 61; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 80. iv. 22.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 7; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 273; J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 164; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 195; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 262. v. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 919; *Ibid.*, *Evening*

by Evening, p. 170; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 205 v. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1561; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 270; R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 230.

Chap. v., vers. 2-8.—"It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled," etc.

I. CHRIST is ever knocking at the heart; in those who have not received Him, that they may receive Him; in those who have received Him, that they may receive Him more fully; in those who are negligent or who relax that they may rouse themselves; in those who are holy that they may be holier still. Christ is within the heart, else we could not open it. He is without it, because it is finite, He infinite. He knocks by all things which teach us to choose Him; that He is all, and all else nothing, except as He is in it, and comes with it, and makes it anything.

II. In the Song of songs, our Lord speaks of another case, when at His knocking the bride delayeth to open. He finds the soul of the Church after long peace, when not strung by trouble within or without, at ease, relaxed, unaware that He is not with her as before. Since his tender voice fails he puts forth his hand. He takes away what we have set up instead of Him, the idols of our hearts within us or without, and "chastens us whereby we have offended."

III. Our souls are not the home of grace that it should, without effort on our part to detain it, remain there. Its home is God; it comes to us, visits us, dwells with us, but only if we with diligence keep it and use it. We are ascending the mount of God; if we relax, we slip back. But then there follows a time of dreariness. God hides His face, and the soul is chilled. He withdraws His light, and the soul is dark. The remedies for this state are taught us in the Bride. (1) She opened that which was closed before. (2) She mortified what she found amiss. (3) When she found not Him whom her soul loved she sought Him perseveringly in the broad places of the city, in active duty. (4) She was not hindered by discouragement. (5) When she knew no more how to seek, she sent, exhausted, the aspiration to Him, "I am sick of love." That one word speaks all her ills, all her needs, as Martha and Mary sent to Jesus, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick."

IV. Desolations of soul, even though chastisements of sin,

are among God's choicest means of enlarged grace. By these God teaches the soul how unutterable an evil it is to be separated from Him. He teaches her to hate the memory of all sin, to cleanse herself from all lesser faults which come between her and God. He stirs the inmost heart, kindles her longings, makes her love Himself for Himself, increases her desires that, when they are increased and enlarged, He may fill them.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 92.

REFERENCES: v. 2-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 793. v. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 367; C. A. Fowler, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 207. v. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 273; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 217. v. 5.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 97. v. 5, 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 230. v. 6.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 89. v. 8.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 539; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 235. v. 9.—J. Richardson, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 817; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 290. v. 9, 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 239. v. 11.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 304. v. 13.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 122. v. 16.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1001, and vol. xxiv., No. 1446; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 69. vi. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 252. vi. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 984. vi. 5.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 210. vi. 10.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 261.

Chap. vi., ver. 11.—"I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded."

I. THE Church is a garden in a valley. This sets forth (1) the nature of her distinction; (2) the sufficiency of the protection which she enjoys; (3) the abundance of her supplies; (4) the lowliness of her condition.

II. We have in this text Christ in the valley with His Church. He is with her (1) in the valley of temptation; (2) in the valley of tribulation; (3) in the valley of death.

III. The text shows us Christ in His Church, looking for evidences. He comes to see (1) the characteristics of true piety; (2) the diversity of true gifts; (3) the different developments of true life.

W. H. BURTON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 741.

REFERENCES: vi. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 275; S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii.,

p. 51. vi. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1155. vi. 13.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., No. 593, and vol. xxx., No. 1794; S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 256.

Chap. vii., ver. 1.—"How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!"

I. NOTICE, first, the Church's or the believer's name—"daughter" and "prince's daughter." (1) She is called "daughter." This points to the tender relation subsisting between Christ and His people. When Jehovah in the Old Testament speaks most endearingly of His ancient Church, He calls it "the *daughter* of Zion." (2) Again, she is a "prince's daughter." He reminds her of her pedigree. It is no ordinary birth. She is one of the adopted children of the "King of kings"—those who by virtue of their spiritual relationship to the Prince of the kings of the earth, their Elder Brother, are themselves "made kings and priests unto God."

II. Consider the subject of commendation: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes!" (1) The shoe or sandal, in ancient times, and in Oriental countries, was the badge of freedom and honour. (2) Shoes or sandals were emblems of joy; while the want of these was equally recognised and regarded as a symbol of grief and sorrow. (3) The sandals on the feet speak of activity, and duty, and preparedness for Christ's service. They point to the nature of the journey the believer is pursuing. Though a pleasant road, and a safe road, and a road with a glorious termination, it is at times rough: a path of temptation and trial. Unshod feet would be cut and lacerated with the stones and thorns and briars which beset it. (4) The shoes point to the believer as a messenger to others. The Church in each of her members must be, or ought to be, shod as a ministering one.

J. R. MACDUFF, *Communion Memories*, p. 109.

REFERENCES: vii. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, pp. 286, 291, 301; *Ibid.*, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 224. vii. 9.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 160.

Chap. vii., ver. 11.—"Let us go forth into the field."

CONSIDER the lessons taught us in the rustling language of the standing corn.

I. Here are revelations from God. In the fields we see (1) His power; (2) His wisdom; (3) His goodness; (4) His faithfulness.

II. Life comes out of death. A few months ago this bright field of teeming life was a graveyard, and every individual grain died, and was buried here in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. The cemetery is the field of God. I hear the winds of heaven making music through the standing corn, and this is the burden of their song, "Sown in dishonour, and raised in glory."

III. Like comes forth from like. This heavy crop of wheat is all the outcome of scattered wheat, and no other kind of plant could possibly arise. "What a man soweth that shall he also reap."

IV. Much comes from little. In a small compass of bag and basket was the seed-corn contained. What spacious yard, capacious barn, and extensive granary will be required to hold the vast result. "Despise not the day of small things."

V. Fruit comes from labour. Success is the offspring of toil. This grand field is no happy accident. This field of waving wheat is the farmer's fee for hard and willing work. Nothing is to be gained by listless indifference.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 138.

REFERENCES: vii. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 130. vii. 11-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 605, and vol. xviii., No. 1066. vii. 12, 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 307. vii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 275. viii. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 321. viii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 877; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 291; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 330. viii. 5-7.—R. M. McCheyne, *Memoirs and Remains*, p. 342. viii. 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 341; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 289. viii. 6.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 5th series, p. 113 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 166). viii. 6, 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 364; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 386. viii. 11.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 352. viii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1716; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 306.

Chap. viii., vers. 13, 14.—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it," etc.

I. NOTICE the title by which the Church is addressed. "Thou that dwellest in the gardens." (1) A garden is an enclosed space taken from the surrounding uncultivated waste—connected with it, but yet not of it; separated and distinct from all around. Is not this true of the Church of the Redeemer? (2) A garden is designed for a special and peculiar purpose.

So it is with the Church of the Redeemer. God has a special design to carry out in those whom He calls to be members of the mystical body of Christ: they have been redeemed from iniquity that they should be a peculiar people to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. (3) We generally find that a garden is protected or defended by a wall or fence against the intrusion of those who would enter to steal or injure. So it is with the Church: it is guarded by all the Divine attributes; it is defended by the Almighty power of God. (4) The productions of a garden are not such as naturally grow or spring up of themselves. Does not this apply to the soil of the human heart? (5) We have in a garden great variety. So with the Church of the Redeemer. The gifts of God are different, and the callings of God are different.

II. Look next at our Lord's address to the Church (ver. 13). "The companions hearken to Thy voice." This presupposes that amongst all true disciples of Christ there is mutual intercourse or fellowship, that they converse one with another on the things which belong to their everlasting peace. The warning is that we must never allow fellowship one with another to supersede fellowship with Christ Himself.

III. Notice the response which the Church makes to this address. "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." These words are to be regarded as a prayer for the return of the Saviour, and there are three senses in which we may understand this as a prayer for the coming of Christ: (1) It may be a prayer of the believer for the coming of Christ in the fuller revelation of Himself to His own soul; (2) we may understand this as a prayer for Christ's return to His Church; (3) we may understand it as a prayer for the coming of Christ in His glory.

E. BICKERSTETH, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 438.

REFERENCES: viii. 13, 14.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, p. 374; R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 210.

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